DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION WRAP-UP

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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MARTIN FILLER

So Long, Civil Liberties
NEAL POLLACK

AUGUST 28 & SEPTEMBER 4, 2000

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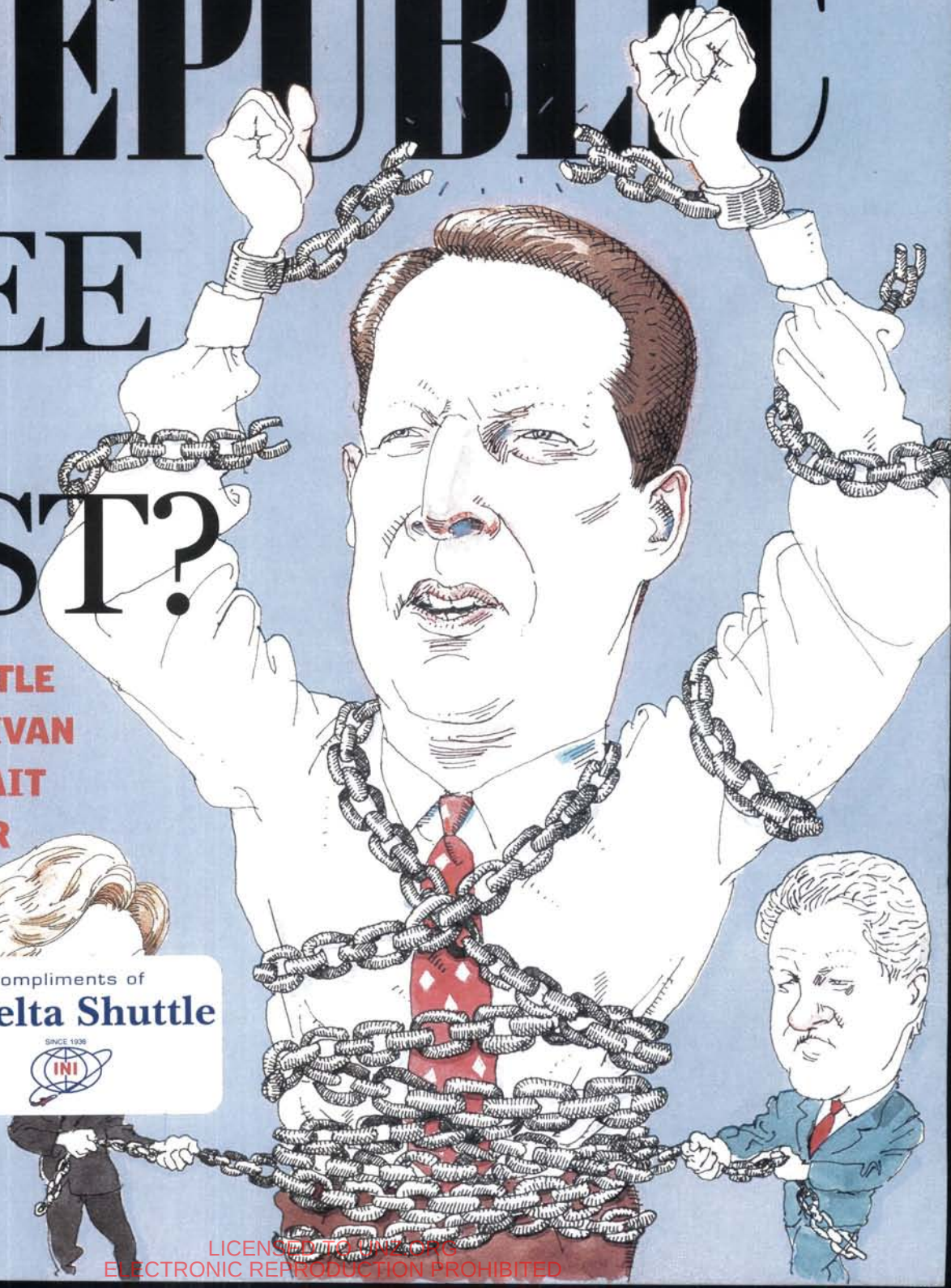

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Kids Left Behind

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

Recently, a proposal that I made got a lot of attention and was interpreted by some as being a simple call for an extra year of high school. That was wrong. I talked about the small but significant number of middle and high school students who do not have the basic skills they need to do secondary school work and how to develop the knowledge and methodology to help them.

Elementary school students are achieving in reading and math well beyond previous levels. And those who are behind will have time to catch up if we provide them with extra help and smaller classes.

But many of the secondary school students who were not beneficiaries of high standards when they were in elementary school (and who may have been socially promoted) don't have the basic skills to master high school courses and high-stakes tests. They may not read well, but they are smart enough to know they will have a tough time meeting the new graduation requirements. We are already hearing about an uptick in high school dropouts—and, as we know, these kids will be dropping into a world where miserable, dead-end jobs are about the best they can hope for.

What Can We Do?

Some people say we should relax the standards so these young adults will not be "sacrificed." Although doing that may prevent any worrisome increase in high-school dropout statistics, it will not make the kids themselves any better prepared to get decent jobs or go to college.

Others say the kids and their teachers should just work harder. This kind of tough talk sounds good, but it rings hollow for anyone who knows what goes on in the classroom. Teachers are desperate to help their students, but they are in a bind. If they teach material at a lower level in order to reach their students, few of the kids will be able to learn quickly enough to pass high-stakes exams. But if they present material at a higher level, the kids won't get it—and will also fail the exams.

The fact is, most secondary school teachers don't know how to overcome basic reading and math deficits because they were never trained to do so. Moreover, helping young adults raise their basic skills is an area in which little work has been done.

The good news is that there are programs that have taken on this challenge, and some are showing positive results.

We can't just let struggling students fall by the wayside.

The Talent Development Model and High Schools that Work are two examples. Right now, they don't reach many kids, but if the federal government were to lead an all-out effort to extend these programs and put them into schools where the approximately 350,000 to 415,000 tenth to twelfth graders who drop out each year are concentrated, many of these students could be helped.

At the same time, a federally sponsored effort by the Departments of Education and Labor could stimulate research and pull together existing knowledge and practice from successful adult literacy programs so they can be adapted and applied in our secondary schools.

Military Expertise Useful

The military also has important expertise to offer, and we should be sure to make use of it. At three times in the past, the military accepted young adults who failed the aptitude tests required for entry into the service. The military took on the challenge of getting them up to the skill levels they needed, and the results were spectacular, not only during their military service but when they returned to civilian life.

Finally, it's important to give youngsters who need it the time to catch up by guaranteeing them after-school and summer-school programs. As a last resort—for those kids who need even more help to meet the standards for graduation—we should consider a transitional-year program, an extra year, either before or during high school, whenever we find they need it. And of course all such programs should be staffed by teachers specially trained to accelerate the basic skills of young adults.

If we don't do this work and do it soon, too many kids will be in danger of dropping out. This is awful for them and it spells danger for the standards movement. History demonstrates that increases in dropout rates are followed by pressure to lower standards and reinstate social promotion, with all its disastrous consequences for students and society. We've been there, done that. Let's now go forward by offering serious help to older students who need it. ▮

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Former White House assistant Peter Robinson has been a loyal Republican all his life...

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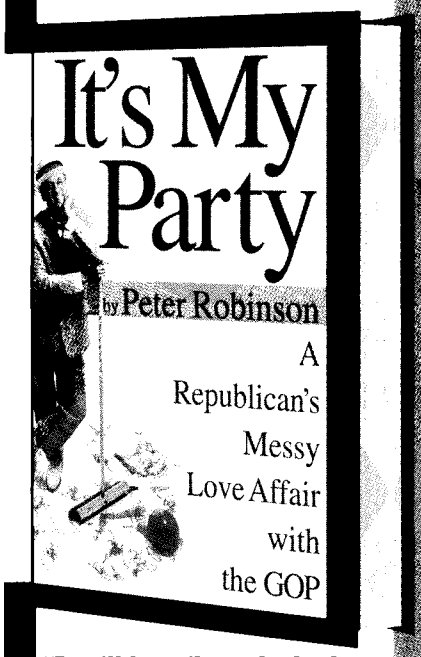

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CORRESPONDENCE

Ashes and diamonds

TO THE EDITORS:

As a lifelong advocate for social and economic progress in Africa, I am deeply disturbed by Ryan Lizza's distorted characterization of my relationship with Liberian President Charles Taylor and my position regarding U.S. policy toward Sierra Leone and Liberia ("Where Angels Fear to Tread," July 24). During a lengthy interview with the author, I made several points that I would like to repeat here, since Lizza chose to exclude my remarks from his story. His lack of objectivity is as obvious as it is disappointing.

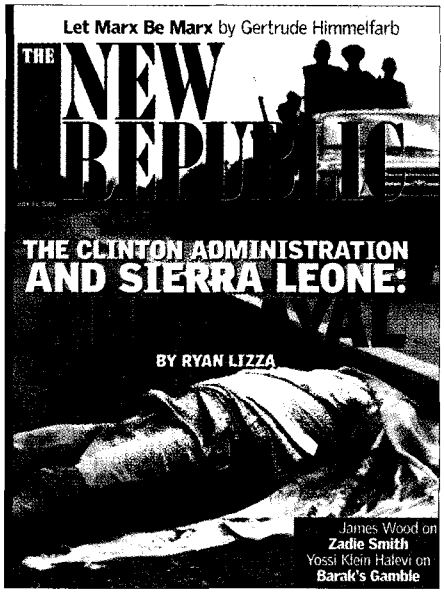
Throughout my service on the House Subcommittee on Africa, my primary objective has been to bring a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Sierra Leone and other African nations. Peace has a price tag, and it frequently entails compromise. Unfortunately, bringing all sides to the table often means dealing with groups whose actions have been reprehensible. In South Africa, those who carried out the deplorable system of apartheid had to be brought into the reconciliation process. In Northern Ireland, the ongoing peace talks could not move forward without the involvement of parties linked to acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. The same can be said of the Middle East negotiations.

I believed that the killing and maiming in Sierra Leone would not stop until the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) agreed to surrender its weapons. This could not be accomplished unless the group was included in the negotiating process. That is simply a political reality, just as it is a political reality that the Republican-controlled Congress would never agree to send U.S. troops to protect the people of Sierra Leone. Lizza acknowledges that Taylor is a force to be reckoned with yet faults me for speaking to him.

I flatly reject the writer's conclusion that support of the Lomé Peace Accord makes one an apologist for the RUF. Lizza attacks me for supporting the accord, which resulted in a cessation of warfare and an end to the brutal mutilation of women and children. As a matter of fact, even though the cease-fire was broken, the mutilation has not resumed. Apparently Lizza believes that it is better to do nothing at all than to engage in a peace process that later suffers a setback.

As a longtime human rights activist, I have visited Africa and other Third World nations over the course of many decades, long before my election to Congress. I have seen firsthand the horrors of genocide and the suffering of victims of unspeakable atrocities, and I have worked tirelessly to change conditions in Africa. For Lizza to suggest that I purposely support policies resulting in the maiming and killing of innocent civilians is outrageous.

DONALD M. PAYNE
United States Representative
Washington, D.C.


Let Marx Be Marx by Gertrude Himmelfarb
THE NEW REPUBLIC
THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION AND SIERRA LEONE:
BY RYAN LIZZA
James Wood on Zadie Smith
Yossi Klein Halevi on Barak's Gamble

TO THE EDITORS:

Ryan Lizza raises many disturbing questions about U.S. policy in Sierra Leone and in Africa more generally. But he fails to articulate what exactly should be done.

Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) could provide a force to counter the RUF, as Lizza implies, but such a "solution" is not without substantial risks. Lizza accepts unquestioningly Nigeria's lament that it spent $1 million per day in Sierra Leone. He does not mention widespread allegations that Nigerian troops were largely corrupt and more interested in entrepreneurial undertakings than in peacekeeping. Nor does he mention the summary executions and other human rights violations that Nigerian troops committed when retaking Freetown from the rebels in January 1999.

Ironically, despite having been replaced by the United Nations because of its shortcomings, ECOMOG, with its proved willingness to incur and inflict casualties on a scale others will not tolerate, represents the best long-term prospect for promoting peace in Sierra Leone. To be effective, however, an ECOMOG force would need significant Western assistance and U.N. supervision.

The Clinton administration, though hypocritical and irresponsible at times,

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has made the resolution of African conflicts a higher item of concern on the U.S. and international agendas. It will be difficult, however, to gain support for expanding the U.N. presence in Congo if the U.N. operation in Sierra Leone is seen to be bloated and directionless. The United Nations and the West must play a more active role, directly through U.N. peacekeeping and indirectly by supporting regional undertakings.

ERIC BERMAN
Arlington, Massachusetts

Mousetrap

TO THE EDITORS:

I enjoyed Gertrude Himmelfarb's spirited attack on my new biography of Karl Marx ("Let Marx Be Marx," July 24). May I, however, be permitted to defend myself on one point of fact? Himmelfarb writes that "it was not Marx, as Wheen says, but Engels who, after Marx's death, said that they had abandoned *The German Ideology* to the 'gnawing of mice'—not the 'gnawing criticism of the mice.'" Clearly, Himmelfarb has never read the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in which Marx (not Engels) recalls how *The German Ideology* became rodent fodder: "We abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of the mice all the more willingly since we had achieved our main purpose—self-clarification." This preface was published in 1859, when Marx was still very much alive.

FRANCIS WHEEN
Essex, England

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB REPLIES:

Francis Wheen is quite right. Marx did make that remark. And so did Engels, only slightly reworded, in 1888 in his little book *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. It was the latter that I cited. Had Wheen footnoted his quotation, we would have been spared this exchange, and we might have addressed some of the more important issues I raised in my review.

Partial truths

TO THE EDITORS:

Uncharacteristically, my friend Jeffrey Rosen's piece addressing the Supreme Court's invalidation of Nebraska's "partial-birth" abortion ban contains a factual error ("Pride and Prejudice," July 10 & 17). "[N]ot a single state," he writes, "has passed ... a ban on third-trimester abortions that contains an exception for the woman's health." In fact, Nebraska itself, like 35 other states and the District of Columbia, completely bans all third-trimester abortions, except when necessary to protect the life or health of the pregnant woman. (These exceptions are required by the Constitution as construed by the Supreme Court in *Roe* v. *Wade* and *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*.) When Nebraska's "partial-birth" abortion statute was enacted, then, no legislative action was needed to "sav[e] the lives of viable fetuses."

The law that the Court struck down, like those passed by 29 other states, targets a single method of performing abortions before viability, a method that is sometimes the safest. Although abortion opponents have confusingly dubbed them "partial-birth" abortion laws, as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg pointed out at oral argument in the Nebraska case, because these provisions apply before viability, they do not address the circumstance that phrase evokes, a circumstance that would border on infanticide. As Rosen notes, these laws, based on a draft by the National Right to Life Committee, do not

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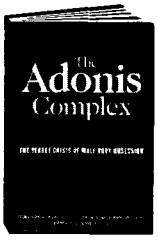

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

One Last Time

FROM THE MOMENT he began his Monday-night entrance, swaggering through the labyrinth from the convention hall's greenroom, late as usual, chin quivering upward, eyes wrinkling toward the sky, Bill Clinton clearly knew this was his last moment in the sun. And so it was: a speech so stale in its rhetoric, so quotidian in its content, so laden with half-truths and glaring omissions that it ranked with Clinton's most memorable concoctions of higher blather. The pundits loved it; the TV cameras captured weeping women gazing toward the podium; the networks stuck with the old charlatan for an additional half-hour of programming time, stymied once again by a man who still thinks the world needs to wait for him.

"We will miss him" was the almost universal response. I won't. Surely Al Gore won't. When the cameras caught up with the vice president afterward, he mumbled a few polite words but seemed almost stunned by his boss's vanity. He looked only slightly less mortified when Clinton corralled Tipper Gore into a group hug with Hillary in Michigan a day later. And his mortification is well-founded. Clinton only gave reasons for supporting Gore late in his speech, long after most swing voters were asleep. The language sounded like a letter of recommendation a teacher is required to write but doesn't really believe. So Al Gore was a "good man." He was "always there." Where else was he going to be? When the two men had lunch together, "we talked about the business between us and the business of America. But we'd also often talk about our families, what our kids were doing, how school was going, what was going on in their lives." If this banality wasn't enough, Clinton stuck in two focus-group buzzwords: Gore was "a strong leader," and he cared about "ordinary Americans." What a plug. The entire argument for Gore rested on the supremely narcissistic notion that Clinton knows the guy, and if you like Clinton, you should like Gore. Bill Clinton as a character reference?

There was no mention of the second impeachment trial in the country's history; no reference to anything Clinton might have failed to do in his seven and a half years in office; no explicit exoneration of Gore in the Lewinsky ordeal that the president foisted on the country through his compulsive lying; no apology to the vice president, to the first lady, or to the country for what Clinton did to the rule of law or the simple credibility of the presidency through his multiple acts of perjury and deceit. In other words, Clinton behaved as Clinton always behaves: with no sense of duty, propriety, or honor, and above all with no sense of responsibility for his own actions. Even now. Even after everything. Even when the country is more than willing to let go of the past, if Clinton would only let go of his own self-serving distortion of it. The one thing Clinton needed to do last week was take final responsibility for his actions and set Gore free. He didn't. He never will.

The only responsibility Clinton ever takes is for things other people do. The crux of his convention argument is that good economic stewardship is his legacy and that he and Gore and the Democrats alone have provided it. But, weirdly, the only important policy initiatives for which Clinton was clearly and personally responsible—the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and permanent normal trading relations with China—went unmentioned. The rest was familiar Clintonian snake oil. Clinton's much-heralded "longest peacetime recovery" was actually made possible by President Bush's brave tax hike and began before Clinton took office, a simple fact the president has yet to acknowledge. The rightly praised 1993 budget deal emerged only after Clinton's initial budget—with its Reichian pump-priming and BTU tax—was mercifully gutted by a Democratic Congress.

Sure, Clinton deserves credit for so swiftly becoming, in his words, an Eisenhower Republican; but he shares it with conservative congressional Democrats, Al Gore, Alan Greenspan, Robert Rubin, and, above all, the now-forgotten Lloyd Bentsen, who rescued Clinton's economic policy in its cradle. The same can be said of many of the president's other achievements. The welfare reform Clinton now basks in was foisted on him by the Republican Congress after the president blew all his political capital trying to socialize medicine. So was a balanced budget in 1996—which Clinton resisted until Dick Morris showed him the polling numbers—and the subsequent surpluses that Clinton now cites as the central evidence of his success. These are not details. They are the truth of the last eight years. Every president takes liberties in appropriating credit for the good things that happen on his watch. But Clinton's rewriting of his public history is second only to his amnesia under oath.

Among Clinton's deepest legacies is his wife. He first foisted her on the country in the health care debacle of 1993. And he is still pushing her as far as he can. Before his speech, we had to endure several prime-time minutes of Hillary Rodham Clinton's oratory. If you needed proof of her mediocrity, you had only to absorb the most important speech of her career. It amounted to a claim that she cares about children, which I do not doubt, but which is not exactly a sentiment on the farther reaches of political daring. The rest consisted of vapid anecdotes that revealed nothing but her own alleged caring, bromides that said nothing an ad agency couldn't tell you. Her speech ended with a piece of graciousness that was also, of course, untrue. She said: "I will always be profoundly grateful to all of you and to the American people for the last eight years. Really, the most important thing that I can say tonight is thank you. Thank you for giving me the most extraordinary opportunity to work here at home and around the world on the issues that matter most to children, women, and families." But of course the American people never gave her that opportunity. They never voted for her for anything. She took power all by herself—and now thanks us for it. You're welcome, Hillary. Now at least some people get a chance to vote for Rick Lazio.

In some ways, of course, the Clintons did us all a service last Monday night. They reminded us that this election is still actually about them. It is about whether the politics of narcissism and spin will ever actually end, whether the blurring of truth and lies, emotion and politics, sentiment and argument will ever recede. I'm not sure at this point in the campaign whether George W. Bush or Al Gore is more likely to achieve this. But Gore must surely understand that what many undecided voters are looking for in his candidacy is not simply a refreshment of the last eight years but an eradication of the cultural, moral, and ethical compass of the two Clintons. Yes, the "issues" count; and the improvised policies of the last two terms deserve a qualified endorsement. But the paramount issue is not contained in the platform of either party. It is the integrity of the presidency and the honesty of the culture—and what we can do to restore them. As Bill Clinton observed on Monday, we have finally crossed that bridge he so constantly and tirelessly invoked. Now it's time to burn it.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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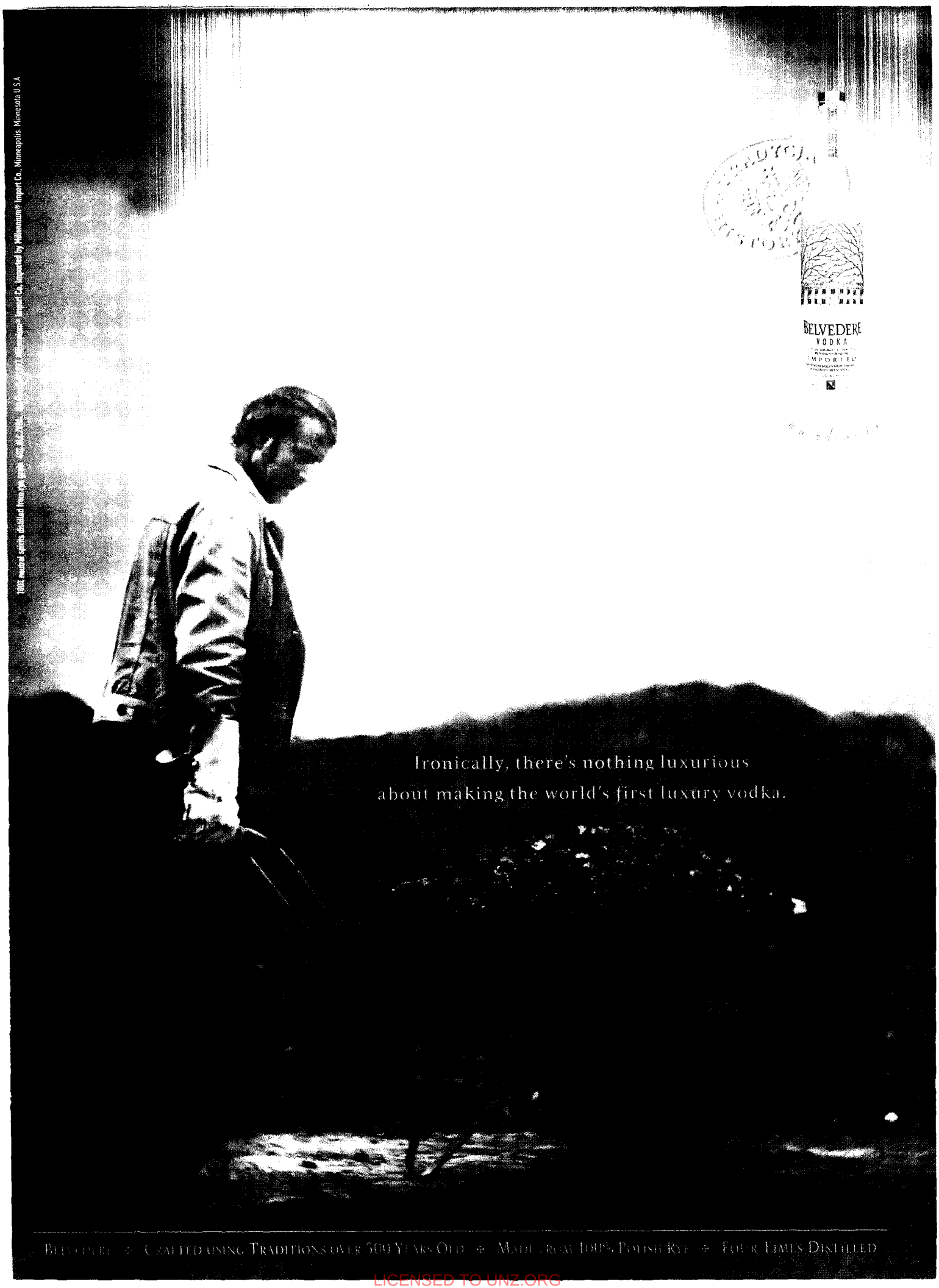
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Inside Politics

IF THERE IS one spot on which Bill Clinton's wandering eye has remained fixed throughout his two presidential terms, it's his place in history. Early in his administration, long before Monica, he liked to rank former presidents. One day, he asked Dick Morris, "Where do I fit in?" The two considered the legendary leaders—Washington and Lincoln—and those who fell just short—Jackson and Truman. "Borderline third tier," Morris finally said. Clinton thought for a moment, then concluded despondently, "I think that's about right."

Ever since, William Jefferson Clinton has tried to catapult himself into the next tier (he can't reach the first, he's told aides, because he has been cursed not to live in momentous times). But now, at the very moment he should be cementing his legacy, he appears determined to undo it. Clinton's political legacy should be the Democrats' reclamation of the mantle of America's majority party—a mantle the party hasn't held for more than three decades. To achieve it, he needs Al Gore to win, and he needs the Democrats to regain the House. But, rather than spend his time in Los Angeles raising money to help his party hold the Oval Office, Clinton sucked up an estimated $10 million for his presidential library—a monument to his own grandiosity. Rather than rush to the aid of the dozens of Democrats trying to take back Congress from Tom DeLay and Trent Lott, he helped his wife raise millions for her own Senate campaign. Rather than gracefully cede the spotlight, as Ronald Reagan did, Clinton remained in Los Angeles for days, parading himself in the company of Barbra Streisand, Steven Spielberg, and a seemingly endless series of celebrity flatterers.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Clinton has long sacrificed his party's fortunes to protect his own. His early agenda of health care, gays in the military, gun control, and tax hikes buried a generation of Democratic moderates in the election of 1994. Then he resurrected his presidency by running against the very congressional Democrats whose numbers he had helped decimate, triangulating them into oblivion. Finally, in 1996, his campaign finance scandals probably kept his party from retaking the House.

But at least during those years he was his party's standard-bearer, and thus his maneuvering kept the White House in Democratic hands. Now his political solipsism seems to benefit only his wife's quest for a Senate seat, which has already received more soft money from party committees than any other congressional campaign in the country. On Monday night, the party gave her a prime-time speaking role, when most novice candidates were lucky to get three minutes in the afternoon on C-SPAN. The first couple has even turned the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the nation's highest honors, into just another source of political patronage, bestowing it last week upon an assortment of luminaries who appeal to New York constituencies—Simon Wiesenthal and Jesse Jackson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and a prominent Brooklyn pastor.

But Clinton has sabotaged his party's effort to maintain the presidency in a more subtle way as well. For eight years now, he has used the White House as a mirror, an excuse to reflect publicly upon his inner struggle. This was never more evident than last week, when, in the latest of a series of "confessions" regarding the Lewinsky affair, the president dismissed a year-long constitutional crisis as a personal growth experience. "I feel much more at peace than I used to," Clinton said. "And I think that, as awful as what I went through was . . . this sort of purging process, if it doesn't destroy you, can bring you to a different place."

Al Gore isn't burdened simply by the Lewinsky scandal; he's burdened by Clinton's conflation of the personal with the political. As Gore seeks the presidency, he is expected to emote, to share his pain, to speak less of his public agenda and more of his private self. Post-Clinton, this is what the media demands, and George W. Bush, for all his talk about changing the tone in the White House, has taken to it with gusto, wallowing in sentiment, talking endlessly about what's "in my heart," and berating critics for focusing on his actual record. But Gore, like Bob Dole before him, has not yet adapted to the Clinton imperative. He prefers the old, dry, impersonal topics—such as what policies he'd implement as president. And when he does self-consciously emote, it's often a disaster.

So, while Gore represents partisan continuity, he represents thematic change. And thank goodness. If the pundits hold that the Democratic convention will be a success to the extent that Gore "truly reveals" himself to the American people, let's hope they judge it a failure. Let's hope Gore keeps his private life private and trusts Americans to judge him on his public record. It's a more challenging path, but it plays to the vice president's substance, which is the only basis upon which he can win. And, in so doing, he might even bring America back to a politics of ideas and away from the politics of meaning—thus burying what is surely the worst Clinton legacy of all. ■

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NOTEBOOK

THE 2004 CONVENTION WILL BE HELD IN SALT LAKE CITY: "This is all about location, location, location," said Democratic National Committee Chairman Joe Andrew, praising Representative Loretta Sanchez's last-minute decision to move a fund-raiser from the Playboy Mansion to a Los Angeles nightclub owned by B.B. King, thereby denying Republicans an opportunity to call the Democrats unwholesome. But it's a dangerous business attributing political statements to party venues. Consider, for starters, the nightclub Sanchez switched to: King, its owner, is a staunch Republican and a backer of George W. Bush. Or take California Governor Gray Davis's fund-raiser at the Riviera Country Club: There, donors teed off on the same green where O.J. Simpson played the day Nicole Brown Simpson was murdered. (The club has since revoked Simpson's membership.) Or House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt's party at Spago, the star-studded Beverly Hills restaurant. Earlier this summer, a manager at the West Hollywood Spago tried unsuccessfully to persuade a local judge to release Ryan Simas, one of Spago's top chefs, who was sentenced to up to two years in prison for assisting in the stabbing murder of a local teenager several years ago. The manager argued that Simas's expertise was needed at the restaurant; Spago is clearly soft on crime. Then there was Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy's "education breakfast" at the Beverly Hilton, site of the 1993 sting operation that resulted in Heidi Fleiss's arrest on pimping, pandering, and narcotics charges. Even worse, at least from Senator Kennedy's perspective: In 1985 it was learned that Robert Kennedy stayed at the Beverly Hilton the night before Marilyn Monroe died, renewing old speculation that, fearing exposure of his and his brother's liaisons with Monroe, RFK was involved in the diva's untimely demise. Meanwhile, the Maryland delegation, staying at the Marina Beach Marriott, got an unwanted brush with a less beloved icon of presidential infidelity: Paula Jones, saying she was in town for a "photo shoot," also booked a room there. Finally, there was the reception Nevada Senator Harry Reid held at the Garden of Eden nightclub—a site of past Al Gore fund-raisers. The Garden of Eden, it turns out, has its own Playboy problem: It's one of Hugh Hefner's favorite hangouts. Indeed, the Garden of Eden is where the 74-year-old skin mogul met two of the four current girlfriends who keep him company at his mansion: twentysomething twins Sandy and Mandy Bentley.

YOU SAY YOU WANT AN EVOLUTION: Joe Lieberman insists his change of heart on Social Security privatization—he used to favor it; he now opposes it—was not a sudden about-face to spare Al Gore the embarrassment of having a running mate who supports his opponent's "risky scheme." Indeed, on the Sunday-morning talk shows the day before the convention, Lieberman specifically pointed to his vote on a Senate resolution last year as evidence of his not-so-recent anti-privatization views. "Well, to tell you the truth," Lieberman explained to Sam Donaldson, "I've decided it [privatization] shouldn't be looked at, not in the way that George W. Bush [wants to], and I voted that way in 1999 on a resolution." But that resolution merely expressed opposition to the federal government's directly investing Social Security funds in the financial markets. A sensible position, to be sure—so sensible the resolution passed 99 to 0—but not really a rejection of privatization, since most privatization plans call for individuals, or a quasi-government entity, to invest the money. Confronted with this information by THE NEW REPUBLIC, Lieberman's Senate staff said he misspoke: the vote to which he was referring was, in fact, on a more sweeping April 1998 pro-privatization resolution that called for dedicating the federal budget surplus to a "program of personal retirement accounts." And Lieberman, his office proudly notes, voted against that resolution. Fair enough. But a few weeks after that vote, in an interview with *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Lieberman said, "I think in the end that individual control of part of the retirement/Social Security funds has got to happen." Who said evolution was steady progress?

SHE BELIEVES THE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE AND THE PAST: If there was a theme to Hillary Clinton's speech on the convention's opening night, it was that she cares about children: over the course of her 25-minute address, she mentioned the words "child" and "children" a whopping 41 times. Indeed, Clinton's zeal for the little ones was so strong it seems to have clouded her memory. In her speech, the first lady fondly recalled the post-convention bus trip she, her husband, and Al and Tipper Gore took during the 1992 presidential campaign. "Along the way we saw faces of hope—but also faces of despair," Clinton told the delegates. "I remember a group of children holding a sign that said PLEASE STOP. IF YOU GIVE US EIGHT MINUTES, WE'LL GIVE YOU EIGHT YEARS. Well, we did stop, we did listen. And what an eight years it has been." It's a touching anecdote—made even more touching because children were holding the sign. Or were they? In a 1992 interview with *The Washington Post*, just a few months after the bus trip in question, Clinton recalled: "[T]he buses were goin' by kind of slow and [Bill Clinton] was wavin' out the window and all of a sudden he saw a sign that a *man* was holdin' that said GIVE US EIGHT MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU EIGHT YEARS. And Bill said, 'Stop the bus!'" No word yet on whether the "children" were also wearing Yankees caps.

RESEARCHERS WANTED: On "Larry King Live" at the end of the convention's second night, CNN's Wolf Blitzer described an interview with Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend thus: "I asked her, 'This must be bringing back some happy memories, because your uncle, John F. Kennedy, got the nomination here in Los Angeles.' And she said, 'Yes, it does. But remember, my dad, Bobby Kennedy, was assassinated here.'"

AND WE THOUGHT SHE WAS WITH W.: "Al Gore is the one who will fight for hope, security, independency in this land."

—Lois DeBerry, Tennessee House speaker pro tem

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AND IN A NOD TO THE PARTY'S SECESSIONIST WING: "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."
—from the 1996 Democratic Party platform

"One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all."
—from this year's party platform

DEPARTMENT OF IMPROBABLE REACTIONS: "'From my lips to God's ears.' That is a Yiddish expression that sprang to my mind when I heard Al Gore had picked Joe Lieberman."
—Representative John Lewis on Wednesday night

SHE'S BAAAAACK: When Lenora Fulani resigned as co-chair of Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign in June, most people assumed the Marxist-Leninist's crusade to take over the Reform Party and gain control of its $12.6 million in federal matching funds had finally reached an end. Which would have been a very good thing. As David Grann revealed in these pages ("Coming Soon to a Presidential Campaign Near You," December 13, 1999), Fulani, who has spent years trying to infiltrate more mainstream parties, has had a troubling history with federal funds. In 1992, when she received federal matching funds while running as the New Alliance Party's (NAP) presidential candidate, the Federal Election Commission could not trace where $73,750 of the taxpayer dollars had gone. But just because Fulani no longer supports Buchanan doesn't mean she's given up on her quest for the $12.6 million. In fact, it was Jim Mangia, one of Fulani's longtime supporters and a former NAP member, who led the walkout at last weekend's Reform Party Convention in Long Beach, California, when delegates upset with Buchanan's nomination held their own convention and claimed they were the rightful heirs to the party. (Fulani and her allies pulled a similar trick at the 1988 Peace and Freedom Party convention.) What's more, Mangia, now chairman of the breakaway Reform Party, isn't the only Fulani ally with a prominent leadership role in the new entity: longtime NAP member and Fulani acolyte Harry Kresky was elected party

VINT'S WEEK

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treasurer. In addition to nominating their own presidential candidate, John Hagelin, the breakaway Reformers lodged a complaint with the FEC, arguing that the $12.6 million should go to Hagelin's campaign, not Buchanan's. And though Hagelin passed over Fulani in his running-mate search, choosing instead a Silicon Valley mogul named Nat Goldhaber, Hagelin's a Fulani ally as well. "[Fulani] is a grassroots organizer, populist candidate, building a party of, by, and for the people," Hagelin declared in his acceptance speech. "I would have been honored to run with Lenora as my running mate in this race." Says one longtime Reform Party member, "Fulani has gained all the marbles." And the marbles are really what she's been after all along.

IMAGES THAT KEEP US AWAKE AT NIGHT: "I'm a guy who's dealt with superheroes most of my life, and, sir, you have great potential. I think you would learn to climb the side of buildings and wear spandex tights. I think I could make you famous."

—Marvel Comics publishing tycoon Stan Lee to Bill Clinton, at a Brentwood fund-raiser

WAX ON, WAX OFF: "I am part of the real diversity and the real difference of the Democratic Party," boasted Norm Mineta, secretary of commerce and a Japanese-American, speaking on the convention's second night. But, a few moments earlier, in a thinly veiled gibe at the Republicans for the parade of minority bit players they highlighted at their convention, Mineta declared, "I am not from Central Casting." Fair enough. But then, mere minutes after Mineta's remarks, another Asian American took the stage: Pat Morita, better known as Mr. Miyagi of *The Karate Kid*. After performing the national anthem, Morita raised his arms and pantomimed the movie's famous "swan kick." What was that about Central Casting?

LESS TRUTH, MORE ARTIFICE: "They didn't even put up the charade of including a person of color in the selection process."

—former Bill Bradley spokesman Jacques DeGraff, complaining to *Newsday* about the Democratic veepstakes

IN 1988, FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION WERE ALSO A PROTEST: In Jesse Jackson's Tuesday-night convention speech, he paid homage to the history of protest at Democratic Party conventions. "We affirm protests," Jackson declared. "We must make room for protesters and turn their ideals and creative energy into progress." Then Jackson ticked off some instances where that idealism and creativity brought about change: "In 1960, public accommodations was the protest. In '64, it was a law. In '64, the right to vote was a protest. In '65, it was a law. In '88, affirming PLO and Israel talking was a protest. Today, it is law." The implication, of course, is that it shouldn't have taken so long: after all, why did blacks have to wait till 1964 to get public accommodations? Didn't they deserve them in 1960? But that's where Jackson's analogy goes off track. There's a good reason Israel wasn't talking to the PLO in 1988: the PLO then refused to recognize Israel as a state. In fact, Yasir Arafat's organization, by dint of its charter, was pledged to destroy Israel by force. Sometimes it's not merely a lack of "idealism and creative energy" that causes protest to be unrealized. Sometimes it's just good policy.

LINCOLN AND MOZART BETTER START DOING MORE FUND-RAISERS: "Let's raise our glasses to our president, the greatest president of all time."

—John Travolta in a toast to President Clinton at a Los Angeles dinner for $25,000-and-up donors

"[She's] the greatest artist of all time."

—Democratic National Convention Chairman Terry McAuliffe in a salute to Barbra Streisand at a Los Angeles brunch to raise money for Bill Clinton's presidential library

THE TZITZIT COST MORE: Introducing the newest in multicultural election kitsch: the Gore-Lieberman 2000 yarmulke. When Marsha Greenberg of Stamford, Connecticut, heard about Gore's selection of Lieberman, she picked up her crochet needle. Working with an "American-flag blue" base that she had already started crocheting for her young son, she added red-and-white lettering spelling out GORE-LIEBERMAN 2000. Greenberg then contacted Harold Bernstein, a cousin of Lieberman's, and asked him to pass it on to the senator at a Gore-Lieberman rally at the Italian Center of Stamford on August 9. Bernstein did so, but the Southern Baptist Gore intercepted the yarmulke and claimed it as his own. Lieberman's staff soon called Bernstein to request a second yarmulke for the senator. Greenberg had already begun the ten-hour job and sent the skullcap along with Bernstein to the convention. "I've been crocheting straight since last Monday," Greenberg told TNR early this week. "I'm starting to get numb in my left hand." Yet she couldn't stop, because the local Lubavitch rabbi, Yisroel Deren, also wanted to be properly attired for his visit to the convention. Greenberg says she will happily continue crocheting campaign yarmulkes for anyone who requests one, at a price of $75 (plus postage). And, if Gore and Lieberman win, she has plans for an official vice presidential yarmulke. But she won't start on that just yet. "I don't want to jinx them," she explained. "In Judaism we call it an *ayin hara*, an evil eye."

GOING AFTER THE NRA VOTE: "We'd challenge each other to see who could shoot a tin can from furthest away. And, I can tell you, it was usually Al."

—Tommy Lee Jones, Gore's college roommate, on Wednesday night

MORE DISTANCE FROM CLINTON: "I tell you, he [Gore] has the good sense to eat well."

—Tommy Lee Jones

STOP THE PRESSES: "MADONNA GIVES BIRTH TO BOY"

—AOL news headline, August 11

PARDON OUR ARITHMETIC: The Table of Contents for the August 21, 2000, issue incorrectly stated the issue number as 4,446. The correct number is 4,466. ■

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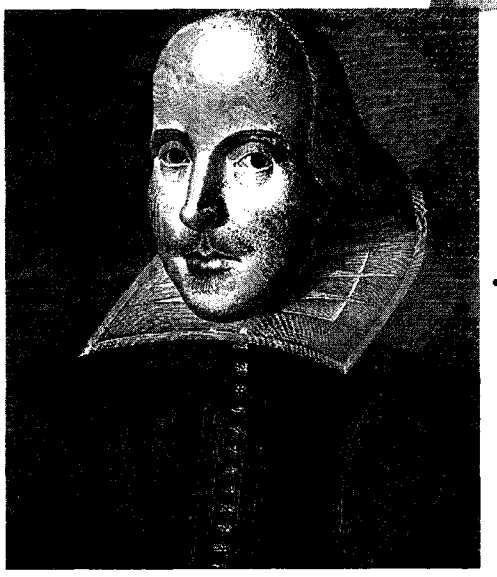

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South Pacific Dispatch

Isle of Blight

By Joshua Kurlantzick

Once the villain was gone, the rejoicing began. On July 26, the news broke that George Speight, who for eight weeks had held dozens hostage in Fiji's parliament, had been captured by army troops and sent to an island penal colony. Pacific Rim diplomats breathed sighs of relief and heaped praise on the Fijian authorities. At the 16-nation South Pacific Forum, foreign ministers drafted a statement "to support Fiji's efforts toward restoring law and order." Fiji still had problems to tackle, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said, but Speight had received his "just deserts," and the country could now return to normal.

Don't count on it. Known to the outside world as an island paradise of palms, resorts, and sand, Fiji will be about as normal as Bosnia. Though Speight may now languish in jail, he has achieved his goals: ousting the country's first ethnic Indian prime minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, and returning the government to ethnic Fijians. What's more, Speight is not the only political leader stoking indigenous Melanesian Fijians' hatred of the country's ethnic Indians, who, though they constitute 44 percent of Fiji's 800,000 people, have dominated much of its economy since Britain first brought them to the island in the 1870s to harvest sugar. Others have taken up his cause. Even if Speight spends his remaining days in Elba-like isolation, his ghost will haunt the South Pacific's largest country, now an apartheidesque state.

On May 19, hooded gunmen led by Speight—a shady, bankrupt part-Melanesian businessman—stormed parliament and captured at least 27 people, including Chaudhry. Speight demanded that Fiji scrap its multiracial constitution and replace Chaudhry with a Melanesian. Within days of the coup, looters rampaged through the capital, Suva, smashing store windows and hauling away loads of Rolex watches and pearls. Speight supporters captured police stations and power plants and set up roadblocks. In response, on May 29 the military declared martial law and began running the country.

After weeks of holding press conferences and negotiating with the military and the Great Council of Chiefs, a nonelected group of tribal leaders, Speight freed the hostages on July 13. In return, the military, which is 99 percent ethnic Fijian, promised Speight and his comrades complete amnesty and a significant role in a new interim government to be headed by President Josefa Iloilo, a Speight ally. But when Iloilo announced that the interim prime minister would be Laisenia Qarase, a banker with closer ties to the military than to Speight, Speight rejected the proposed government. It wasn't long afterward that the military arrested Speight and at least 360 of his closest supporters.

Speight's arrest went some way toward placating the international community. Yet, only two days later, Fiji inaugurated Iloilo and Qarase's interim government, a regime composed almost exclusively of indigenous Fijians. Indeed, the new government, which is supposed to rule until general elections scheduled in three years, has promised indigenous islanders a socioeconomic stranglehold over Indians: the government has decreed that state land and 50 percent of corporate stocks owned by the government be transferred to Melanesians, that Melanesian-owned companies receive sizable tax breaks, and that Melanesian history and culture be accorded top priority in the country's schools, while Indian history and culture is to be practically erased from the textbooks.

In collaboration with the Council of Chiefs—a body limited to native Fijians—Qarase's regime has also drawn up a new draft constitution, which is a far cry from Fiji's inclusive, multiracial 1997 document. The draft constitution—subtitled "Blueprint for the protection of Fijian ... rights and interests and the advancement of their development"—includes a statute guaranteeing that "national leadership positions" would always be held by indigenous Fijians.

Unfortunately, few Melanesian leaders seem bothered by this emerging state-sponsored discrimination against their Indian countrymen. Although the military declared martial law in the wake of Speight's coup, it did little to stop Melanesians from ransacking and burning Indo-Fijians' homes and businesses. No prominent Melanesian politician has called for a return to the 1997 constitution.

Meanwhile, the international community, so quick to laud Speight's arrest, has done little to promote true democracy and equality. The "smart sanctions" (so called because they supposedly punish Fiji without bankrupting its people) that New Zealand, Australia, and several other states slapped on Fiji—cutting off sports links and canceling defense cooperation—have had limited impact. Severing trade links might be a better way of getting the regime's attention. After all, economic pressure has worked in Fiji before: after an ethnic nationalist government alienated foreign investors in the early '90s, Fiji's leaders adopted the 1997 multiracial constitution as a way to lure those investors back.

But, if international response remains tepid, the Fijian government's race-baiting may spread to other islands in the region. In fact, it already has. Inspired in part by Speight, in early June an indigenous militia in the Solomon Islands—another state where native leaders have manipulated popular distrust of imported workers—overthrew the government and seized the prime minister. Though the coup makers ultimately withdrew, allowing a new prime minister to take office and signing a cease-fire, several allied militias still stalk Honiara, the capital, trying to cleanse it of nonindigenous people. Experts warn that similar crises could explode in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia, creating a South Pacific arc of racism and instability. From his island prison, George Speight must be admiring his handiwork. ■

Joshua Kurlantzick is Bangkok correspondent for Agence France Presse.

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Why the convention police deserve protest.

Uncivil Action

By Neal Pollack

It was an inauspicious beginning. On the Democratic National Convention's opening night, a crowd of protesters peacefully assembled outside the Staples Center for a free Rage Against the Machine concert. But after the show, when the crowd refused to disperse and some protesters began hurling bottles and stones at police officers, a mini riot erupted. The Los Angeles Police Department roared into the crowd, launching rubber bullets and projectile beanbags and using pepper spray at point-blank range. "The police were absolutely out of line," fumed Miguel Contreras, secretary-treasurer of the Los Angeles Federation of Labor, who got roughed up in the melee. "They should be ashamed of themselves."

Contreras was right: the police should be ashamed. But for a different reason. The concert fracas was ambiguous. After all, once protesters begin assaulting cops, it's hard to know what constitutes an appropriate and measured response. The real misconduct came days before, at the protesters' "convergence center" across town, where police recorded the license-plate numbers of out-of-state cars, arrested protesters for jaywalking, and buzzed the building at all hours with spotlight-shining helicopters. Things got so bad that on August 11, three days before the convention began, Dean Pregerson, a federal judge in Los Angeles, essentially told the LAPD to cut it out, forbidding the police to enter the protest center to investigate alleged fire-safety and building-code violations without a warrant. The reports of alleged police misconduct, Pregerson concluded with judicial understatement, were "disturbing."

And it's not just the LAPD. Indeed, ever since anti-World Trade Organization protesters turned Seattle into an urban combat zone last November, American cities have been taking drastic and often excessive measures to stifle dissent. And, while the measures aren't necessarily brutal in the familiar pepper-spray-and-rubber-bullets way—and therefore don't draw much media attention—they seriously infringe on civil liberties. During the mid-April protests against the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C., for instance, local authorities closed down a "convergence center" being used for meetings and protest training on the pretense that they had found the makings of a Molotov cocktail on the premises. Later, the police admitted it was actually paint thinner being used to make protest puppets. Similarly, in mid-July, in preparation for animal-rights protests against a genetics conference, the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, supported the enforcement of a little-known ordinance making the wearing of a gas mask a misdemeanor for everyone except police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.

Nowhere were the violations more egregious, though, than in Philadelphia, where this month's Republican National Convention was held. Beginning in June, Philadelphia police began spying on and photographing activists at various meeting sites across the city. Then, once the convention got under way, they progressed to more drastic steps. The nadir came on the convention's second day, when thousands of demonstrators were planning a series of "direct actions"—blocking streets and unfurling banners—to protest the "criminal injustice system." About an hour before the hoopla was to begin, police cordoned off a West Philly street and erected a blue wall in front of the offices of a flooring company that protesters had rented to build their puppets. Trapped inside were 78 activists, as well as the company's owner and several employees. The police claimed they had tips that, within the warehouse, cars might be leaking gas, which would endanger the neighborhood. After that was met with howls of laughter from neighborhood residents, the police said there might be bomb-making materials or "tire-puncturing tools" inside.

After a while, it became painfully obvious that the police had no idea what was inside the warehouse other than a bunch of anarchists. The scene grew even wackier when the warehouse's metal door rolled open to reveal dozens of chanting protesters wearing clown noses and party hats. One by one, police led the demonstrators out of the building, slapped plastic handcuffs on them, and loaded them onto buses. About an hour later, the police obtained a search warrant, which they used to confiscate a few pieces of PVC pipe.

Things only got worse after the convention ended. John Sellers, head of the California-based Ruckus Society—who had been arrested on misdemeanor charges—had his bail set at $1 million (it was later reduced to a still-outrageous $100,000). Other protesters' bails were set between $10,000 and $500,000. According to the protesters, the policed had promised them before the convention that, at most, they would be slapped with summary misdemeanor charges and quickly released. But as The New Republic goes to press, some two weeks after the Republican convention, more than 20 protesters remain in jail. Some are there because they refuse to give their names, but others simply can't make bail.

In both Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, police won widespread praise for "avoiding another Seattle." But they did so because, unlike their colleagues in Seattle, the D.C. and Philly cops took various commonsense, inoffensive preventive measures: cordoning off streets and breaking up into small teams—on horse, bicycle, or motorcycle—that chased down and effectively contained similarly small bands of protesters intent on destroying property.

Unfortunately, other cities (for instance, Los Angeles) seem to think D.C. and Philadelphia avoided chaos because police engaged in spying, preemptive arrests, warehouse-

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seizing, and unreasonable bail. In fact, those abuses merely enraged the demonstrators, making them more hostile to police and more determined to seek revenge during the next set of protests. "The police's plans have completely backfired on them," explained Jason Capell, a 20-year-old protester in Philadelphia who was held in jail for two days without being charged. "We were all arrested for protesting the prison-industrial complex. Now that we've gone through it and been a part of it, our convictions have been completely solidified." Perhaps, next time there's a big demonstration, the police should try undermining the protesters' belief that due process is a myth rather than confirming it. ■

Moscow Dispatch

Mental Health

By Masha Gessen

"This is what a typical hospital in the area where we were trying to work looked like," the speaker intones heavily as a slide is projected on the screen. The building in the photograph, a medical facility in sub-Saharan Africa, is falling apart: peeling paint exposes blackened concrete, rickety window frames hold cracked glass. The audience at the plenary session of last month's international AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa, lets out a collective sigh. The picture has powerfully dramatized the tremendous difficulties developing nations face in combating the AIDS epidemic.

To me, it just looks like a typical hospital. In fact, it looks a lot like the hospital not 20 miles from Moscow where I had my head sewn up following a car accident a few years back; I will never forget the dry shave, necessitated by the lack of running water. Or the Moscow hospital where I wound up the following year for pneumonia; there, I was offered a broken examination cot as a bed and strongly advised to arrange for my own food. Or the military hospital in Rostov that I visited as a reporter, one of Russia's largest and the one shouldering the heaviest burden from the war in Chechnya. Local military officials assured me the hospital was well-equipped and stocked with drugs. But, before I left, representatives of the local Soldiers' Mothers Committee slipped me a list, compiled by the chief doctor, of essential drugs the hospital lacked: aspirin, basic painkillers, vitamins. They also asked me if I knew any foreign journalists who could help obtain a replacement for a long-broken glass part in the hospital's tomography machine, which was itself donated a few years back by some foreigners.

The truth is that, when it comes to health and social services, Russia has joined the developing world. The problem, as the Rostov officers' lie illustrates, is that Russians, or at least Russian officials, won't admit it. Ordinary Russians are bombarded daily with rhetoric aimed at convincing them of their country's continuing accomplishments and power. Otherwise sane Russian journalists proudly referred to last month's economic summit in Okinawa as "the G-8 meeting"—omitting the fact that Russia, whose federal budget equals that of a medium-size U.S. state, was excluded from economic talks (at which, in any case, its representatives would have done little more than ask for debt forgiveness). Despite ten years of collapsing infrastructure, most Russians still foam at the mouth to defend treasured Soviet-era myths—that the country's crumbling education system is the best in the world, for example, or that its battered health care network, deeply flawed to begin with, is as advanced as any First World country's.

But, national pride notwithstanding, everything said about developing countries at the Durban conference is also true of Russia. The health care infrastructure is in desperate disrepair, so much so that hospitals and clinics actually pose a threat to the health of their patients. More than half the population lives below the poverty line, and tuberculosis and other diseases afflicting the poor are epidemic. Infant mortality is rising; life expectancy is falling. HIV spreads unchecked.

If you haven't heard much about Russia's AIDS epidemic, you're not alone—most Russians haven't, either. Some of the reasons are common to all countries plagued by the disease: the stigma attached to the ways the virus is transmitted (in Russia, mostly through intravenous drug use), unwillingness to acknowledge the risk, fear. But a more peculiar kind of denial is also to blame. For, though Russia supports a fairly extensive AIDS bureaucracy, none of the country's health officials have raised their voices to say the obvious: Russia doesn't have a First World-style AIDS crisis, it has a Third World-style crisis, and it needs to swallow its pride and learn from countries like Uganda and Thailand.

So far, Russia's response to its AIDS epidemic has been dismal. The country's network of AIDS centers, created during a wave of HIV hysteria that waxed and waned quickly in the late '80s, serves only one purpose: It attempts to count cases of HIV infection. This effort to catalog cases but not actually treat patients follows a venerable Soviet tradition. Even back when the Soviet Union was creating its now-well-publicized epidemic of drug-resistant TB, its epidemiologists were building the world's most extensive TB-surveillance network: everyone was X-rayed, but no one received proper care. Similarly, directors of local AIDS centers now say Russia "has the epidemic under control." When asked what they mean, they explain that they are using a staggering 20 million HIV tests every year to help track cases of infection.

But even the effort to quantify the epidemic is failing. Most tests are effectively administered without consent, and anonymous testing is virtually unavailable. Furthermore, "placing someone at risk of HIV infection" is a criminal offense, and every person who tests positive is forced to sign a document that can later be used against him or her in court. It's little surprise, then, that people who realize they

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may be at risk for infection do their utmost to stay far away from the testing centers. Equally ominous is that, for at least two years running, official figures have shown that more than 80 percent of the infected are IV drug users. That's ominous because what we know about HIV transmission suggests that the rate of infection among drug users tends to peak quickly, and then other routes of transmission gradually become more common. Russia's AIDS centers know how to find IV drug users—in jail, in detention centers, in detox centers—and test them with or without their consent, but that's about all they know how to do. The centers have no system for locating other infected people, who may by now account for the majority of HIV transmissions. We can only guess at this, of course, because, unlike many other countries, Russia has not undertaken a representative study of HIV prevalence. Still, even its absurdly imperfect system shows that the country has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in Europe.

The absolute numbers are still small: just over 50,000 cases of HIV infection are now registered in the country. But health care officials admit privately that this is an absurd underestimation—some say by a factor of ten, while others say 20 or 100. Where prevalence studies have actually been done, the results have been much more dire: in Krasnogorsk, a town in the Moscow region, 3 percent of people between the ages of 15 and 25 are infected, a rate comparable to that in Angola, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Moreover, of the 50,000 registered HIV cases, more than 20,000 were registered this year alone, which suggests a terrifyingly high rate of transmission. Projections vary wildly, but no one doubts that in a couple of years millions of Russians will have HIV.

And what kind of treatment will Russia offer them? Virtually none at all. In the quality of care available to HIV-positive people, Russia lags behind some of the world's poorest countries. To date, it has not even instituted the common short-term therapy proved most effective in preventing in utero HIV transmission from mother to child—even though the drug required, AZT, is manufactured locally. (Prejudice on the part of many local doctors who believe that HIV-positive women should not become mothers has combined with a lack of initiative at the top to keep the treatment out of the hands of pregnant women.) It is quite likely that other antiretroviral drugs could be made locally as well—Russia retains some First World pharmaceutical technologies—but they won't be: state agencies have already issued licenses to Western drug companies for twelve compounds whose high prices render them out of reach for Russian patients.

Which brings us to a final developing-country malady afflicting Russia: corruption. As it happens, the very pharmaceutical companies granted licenses to make those too-expensive drugs paid to send some highly placed Russian AIDS officials to the Durban conference. And, once there, the officials showed just how much effort they were willing to devote to their country's AIDS crisis. Rather than attend the sessions devoted to drug access for developing or "resource-poor" countries, several members of the Russian delegation used their time to purchase diamonds. The health ministry's AIDS boss, meanwhile, took the opportunity to go on safari. ■

Convention Dispatch

Shadowy

By JONATHAN CHAIT

THREE BLOCKS SOUTH of the Democratic National Convention, the second "Shadow Convention" is poised to convene in a dim, antiquated public hall. A sweaty crowd is swarming through the lobby and onto the sidewalk—everywhere a body can be squeezed, except for a single room next to the entrance. There, a tall, dark-skinned man in sunglasses stands guard, while nearby three young women adjudicate the claims of prospective entrants. "If you're not a special guest, I can't let you in," one of the women explains sweetly. A youngish man in a suit, trying to bypass the gatekeepers, shouts vainly into his cell phone, "Will you tell him I work for Arianna?"

At last the door bursts open. Out files a phalanx of attendants, followed by Gary Hart, Cornel West, and then Arianna Huffington herself, tall and striking. Her bright orange coif, every strand set perfectly in place, sits atop her creamy white, unusually large face, making her appear at once lovely and vaguely inhuman. Her troupe sweeps through the crowd, into the auditorium, and onto the stage. "Welcome to Shadow Convention Los Angeles, the second half of our bicoastal, bipartisan, by-the-people doubleheader," she declares as the throng roars enthusiastically. "Everybody is welcome here. Unlike the other two conventions, there is no hundred-thousand-dollar access fee."

Less than a year ago, the audience would have been wary of such populist oratory, coming as it does from a woman who rose to fame as the wife of a multimillionaire right-wing Republican Senate candidate and as an adviser to Newt Gingrich. But Huffington has undergone a dramatic and well-publicized ideological metamorphosis. These days, she confers with such luminaries of the left as Warren Beatty, Jonathan Kozol, Bill Bradley, and the editors of *The Nation*. In fact, the shadow conventions—a pair of weeklong televised alternative symposia held concurrently with the Republican and Democratic events—seem poised to make Huffington the most important leftist activist in America.

Which is odd, since Huffington doesn't admit to being on the left. The essential conceit of her Shadow Convention is that it speaks for a vast, untapped majority that craves populist reforms. "I am not a liberal," Huffington insisted in Philadelphia two weeks ago. "We're trying to occupy the radical center." But, if there truly is a radical center in American politics, it certainly looks nothing like this. The Shadow Convention offers a window onto not the radical center but the American left—and one of the things it reveals about today's left is that some of its leaders have decided the only way they can escape marginality is to embrace incoherence.

Unlike a regular convention, the point of the Shadow Convention isn't to promote a ticket so much as an idea—or,

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rather, a set of ideas. As such, it consists largely of academic-style panel discussions centering on three issues chosen at Huffington's behest: campaign finance reform, the wealth gap, and the war on drugs. This might seem a somewhat random trio, but not to Huffington. "Ultimately," she announces, "this convention is about the cancer of money in politics and two of its most destructive manifestations: the persistence of poverty in the midst of unprecedented prosperity and a failed drug war that remains unaddressed because there is no constituency that has a financial stake in addressing it."

Huffington's fixation on campaign finance is an effective way to latch her movement to the reformist currents that propelled Arizona Senator John McCain. And, if she had selected a different set of topics, her analysis might make some sense. There are certainly issues on which corporate donations lead politicians to act against the will of the majority. But the drug war is not one of them. In fact, the crackdown on narcotics stems almost entirely from the social mores of the American people. On drugs, the masses and their representatives don't disagree with each other; they just disagree with many liberals. At one point, one of the convention's anti-drug-war speakers concedes as much: "The drug war makes for bad government, but it's good politics," he laments. "We elect those who talk the toughest on drugs." The Shadow Convention's obsession with drug legalization is particularly suspect, since a third of the convention's own financing comes from foundations sponsored by George Soros—who just happens to be an ardent proponent of drug legalization. If you were to apply the Shadow Convention's mode of analysis to the Shadow Convention itself, you might draw a link between those two facts.

The best-publicized part of the Shadow Convention is the evening rapid-response panels, where journalists and comedians watch the Democratic Convention speeches with audiences and trade hip, post-partisan wisecracks. This creates the impression that the Shadow Convention is rooted in a kind of nonideological, "they're all for sale" cynicism. But the longer, more substantive daytime panels reveal the conclave's actual agenda. Huffington has banded together left-liberal organizations with agendas identical to that of the left wing of the Democratic Party. The speakers are a Who's Who of the progressive movement, including Paul Wellstone, Jesse Jackson Jr., Russ Feingold, Michael Lerner, and others. Huffington says the Shadow Convention can't be called liberal because it criticizes both parties. But that's just plain dumb. Its criticisms of the Democrats nearly all come from disappointed liberals bemoaning the party's abandonment of its true faith. The protesters at the 1968 Democratic Convention criticized both parties, too, but they weren't dishonest enough to claim to be speaking from the political center.

When I ask Huffington how she can seriously claim to be anything but a liberal, she insists that "the liberal-conservative distinctions are really obsolete." As evidence, she notes that, on drugs and campaign finance reform, her most prominent allies are McCain and New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson, both Republicans. But Johnson's support for drug legalization and McCain's for campaign finance reform hardly strip these subjects of ideological grounding. The "bipartisanship" here is simply a case of Republicans acceding to positions held overwhelmingly by liberals. McCain and Johnson are prominent precisely because they are outliers in their party.

To be fair, engaging Huffington in a serious discussion of ideology may be beside the point. After all, her public life has always been much more about packaging than policy. And what Huffington has realized about the left is that it needs a new identity: something more hip, less easily attacked, less dourly political. Thus the radical center. There's just one problem: If the term "radical center" describes anything at all, it doesn't describe the people who have shown up for the Shadow Convention. For one thing, they don't seem to think being on the left is a problem. Unlike Huffington—who has built a career on being cool—they don't necessarily mind being marginal if that's the price of their beliefs. In short, they actually take politics seriously.

Consider, for instance, Trim Bissell. With his blue jeans, backpack, and lavender T-shirt advertising the Northwest Folklife Festival, Bissell traces his political activism from the Vietnam War through Central America to the Campaign for Labor Rights, which he currently coordinates. When I run into him, he is asking a middle-aged woman in a floral-print dress for her e-mail address so he can send her updates on sweatshop conditions. After she obliges, I ask what he thinks of the radical center. Crinkling his nose skeptically, he replies, "It sounds like a meaningless concept to me." ■

DAVID SUTER

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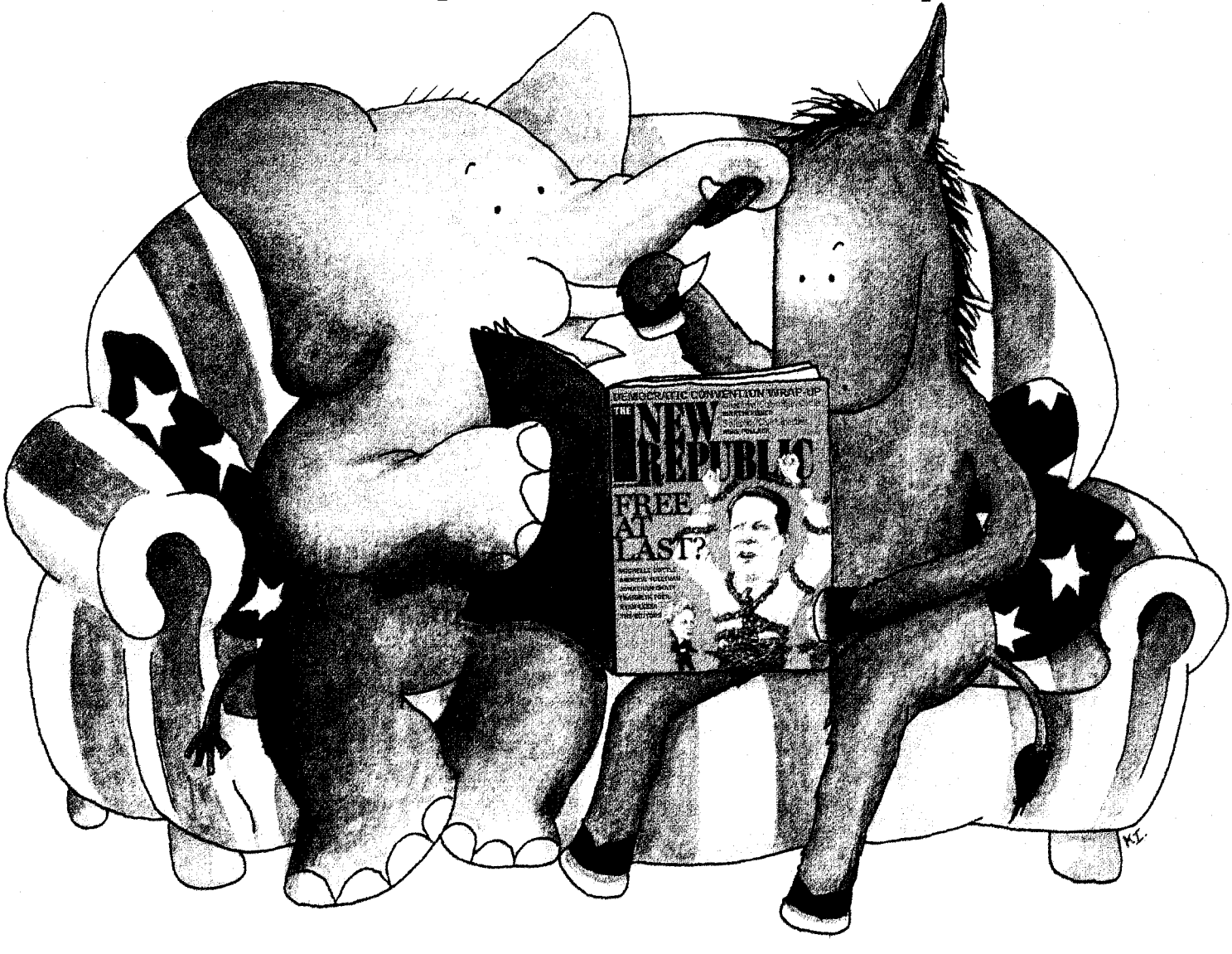

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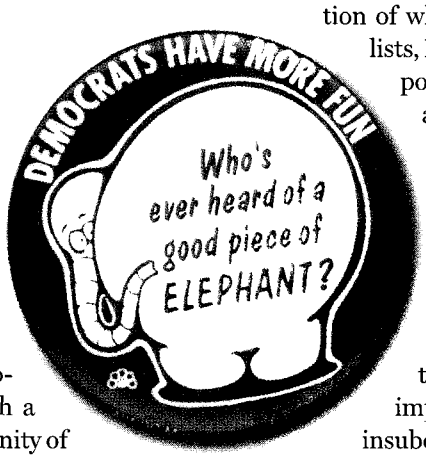
Convention Dispatch

Grovel

By Ryan Lizza



Al Franken has an enormous black mole on his back. I learn this while sipping a cocktail and munching on potato and salmon hors d'oeuvres on a sun-drenched deck overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Malibu, California. Franken, dripping wet from a swim, has gathered with a gaggle of media types in this gated community of million-dollar homes for a pre-convention party. And what do opinion leaders discuss at a party like this? Which party they're going to next. The conversations all have the same competitive dynamic: each person tries to one-up the other by mentioning a more exclusive party he or she plans to attend. The loser is whoever tacitly admits that his party is inferior by asking for help getting into the better one. Here's a typical exchange:

Person A: Where are you going tonight?
Person B: I think the *LA Weekly* party. What about you?
Person A: *Vogue*.
Person B : [Pause] Oh, really? [Sheepishly] Can you get me on the list?

Person A wins.

From Malibu, I drive back to Los Angeles to prepare for the party with the least prestige of the whole convention: People for the American Way's "Convention Kickoff" in the Grand Ballroom of the Beverly Hilton Hotel. I didn't hear a single person in Malibu admit that he or she was going to this party. It's not that the PFAW party lacks brand-name guests or good food. It has both. But it lacks the one essential characteristic required for convention-party prestige: restricted access. The well-meaning, left-leaning folks at PFAW decided to open the doors of their ballroom to anyone who happens by, and this has crippled the party's status. "We decided to be democratic," explains PFAW's Nancy Coleman, a bit defensively. But knowing that others are being turned away is what makes a convention party worth attending, and a gathering that admits anyone is immediately suspect. I'm sure the man at the PFAW bash wearing the T-shirt that says LICK BUSH IN 2000 won't be at Spago.

Spago, the legendary Beverly Hills restaurant, is the setting for a tribute to House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt. As my cab pulls up, I realize that the House Democrats understand access: the entire city block outside the restaurant has been closed. A tent extends from the door out into the street, where a knot of people crush up against one another trying to get in. The gatekeepers for the event are House staffers who have been transformed overnight from lowly Capitol Hill aides into L.A. power brokers decked out with clipboards, headsets, and black suits. Past a sign that says LIMOS, RIGHT 2 LANES, I find Gephardt's press secretary, Sue Harvey. Less than a minute into my elaborate explanation of why I'm not on any of the official invitation lists, Harvey looks at me wearily and says, "At this point, I don't care. Just go ahead." Harvey's approval gets me to another line, where I wait with two teenage youth delegates from Iowa who have never heard of Gephardt, along with Charlie Cook, the House race handicapper. The rope is quickly lifted for Cook, though he arrived several minutes after the teenagers and me. When I ask the gatekeeper to explain this injustice, he explains, "He writes really important things about Congress." But my insubordination annoys him, and he tells a handler to take me back to Harvey to find out if I'm really allowed into the party. Harvey looks blank as I explain that she has already approved my admission. "Oh, did I just give up and let you in?" she asks me. "Exactly," I tell her. She directs my handler to escort me into the tent. Inside, people are feasting on lobster and oysters, and Gephardt is posing for pictures with guests. But, like all these events, the party itself is a letdown. The real rush is getting in the door.

It is at Spago that I begin to formulate my convention-party-access theory. People with undeniable clout—fund-raisers, donors, elected officials, and Hollywood poohbahs—are consistently whooshed past annoying rope lines and admitted everywhere. For others, the process is more complicated. Those with little real clout (for instance, me) who are willing to throw themselves upon the mercy of the prevailing gatekeeper have a reasonably good chance of gaining access. They effectively use their low status to their advantage; their admission is so undeserved that letting them in does more to confirm a gatekeeper's power than turning them away. Take Ryan Rhodes, whom I meet inside Spago. He just happened to be on the same flight to L.A. as Gephardt, his friend was waiting in line for the bathroom with the minority leader's wife, and by the time they landed Rhodes had two Spago tickets. "I'm not even from his district!" he tells me. Gephardt's wife proved her importance by bequeathing access on a nobody.

By contrast, the people who have run into trouble are those without enough clout to be high up on the guest list but with enough that they are disinclined to grovel publicly. As I leave Spago, for example, I notice the host of a well-known political talk show stumbling along a desolate section of Wilshire Boulevard. He bitterly complains that though he was allowed into NBC's "West Wing" party—billed as the hottest ticket in town that night—he was denied access to the event's exclusive inner sanctum. Now he has apparently been rejected from the Spago bash, too, and is angrily retiring to his hotel, the swank Regent Wilshire Beverly.

My final Sunday-night stop is a much-hyped party thrown by Speakout.com, one of several struggling political websites pouring money into advertising and high-profile

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events this week. The fete is at the Mondrian Hotel on Sunset Boulevard, and this morning's *National Journal Convention Daily* warns, "If you don't have a ticket, don't even try. An exclusive party at an ultra-trendy venue." I would seem to have almost no chance of getting inside, but, eager to test my theory, I press ahead. The gatekeeper is an unbearably smug twentysomething with a nasal voice and overly dramatic retro frames hanging onto the tip of his nose. One by one he rejects his supplicants. One woman in an elegant cocktail dress tries to sneak past him while he's distracted; when caught, she pretends she is just looking for the rest room. She is asked to leave the hotel. Someone else tells the gatekeeper that Tipper Gore's office invited him. "This isn't Tipper Gore's party," the gatekeeper snaps. But exhaustive groveling continues to work wonders: the young man tells me, "Why don't you just go in, because I'm sick of talking to you." Again, I marvel at the intricate status dance between would-be guests and appointed gatekeepers: those who challenge the gatekeepers' authority force them to exert power by denying access. Those who openly acknowledge it allow them to exert power by granting access (usually accompanied by a casual put-down).

The party itself turns out to be a huge bore, filled with hundreds of young, social-climbing celebrity seekers but no actual celebrities. The biggest star is Terry McAuliffe, the king of Democratic Party fund-raisers and a prominent FOB but a man barely known outside the confines of the Washington branches of the Palm and Morton's.

On my second night of party-crashing, I decide to see things from the other side. I get permission from Voter.com to hang out with the gatekeepers at a party held at a Hollywood club called the Garden of Eden. This party has generated huge buzz over the last few days—Kevin Spacey, Warren Beatty, Richard Dreyfuss, and the cast of HBO's "Sex and the City" are all expected to show up (though none of them actually do). One person who does appear is Randy Tate, former head of the Christian Coalition. Tate, a vice president at Voter.com, now resembles nothing so much as a bouncer at a New Jersey club: hip, ribbed sport shirt, black pants, and black leather shoes that look as if they were bought at one of the trendy boutiques on Rodeo Drive. The man who once led the Christian conservative movement is now bobbing his head to the beat of "Play That Funky Music (White Boy)" at a Hollywood club around the corner from Crazy Girls exotic strip show and the Walk of Fame. I comment on the unbelievably important role these late-night parties have taken on since the conventions themselves became snoozers. "It's all about the parties," Tate tells me knowingly.

It's at the Garden of Eden party, however, that I witness a scene that blows my budding theory to pieces. The Voter.com staff informs me that President Clinton, a longtime friend of Craig Smith, another Voter.com vice president, is waiting outside while the Secret Service canvasses the club to see if it's safe for him to visit. I imagine him parked alone in his limo, anxiously awaiting word that he can come in and meet Sarah Jessica Parker. But the Secret Service determines that the place is too crowded to ensure his safety, and so the most powerful man in the world is turned away at the door. Next time he should stick with me. ■

Convention Dispatch

Stage Left

By Franklin Foer

It's Monday night at the Staples Center, and, in the Minnesota delegation, Senator Paul Wellstone is a bit grumpy. To any reporter willing to listen, he grouses about his party's insufficient liberalism, its concessions to big business, its political cowardice. And that's a little strange, because, on the giant screen above his head, unreconstructed paleolib Barbara Mikulski is introducing barely reconstructed paleolib Hillary Clinton. Lefties Barbara Boxer and Patty Murray have already taken their turns. Tomorrow the podium will offer more of the same: union boss Gerald McEntee and gay rights activist Elizabeth Birch in the afternoon; Jesse Jackson, Ted Kennedy, and Bill Bradley at night.

The abundance of liberals in prime-time speaking slots stands in stark contrast to the aggressive moderation on display at the Republican convention in Philadelphia, where hard-liners were kept firmly out of public view. The irony is compounded by the fact that, unlike the GOP, the Democratic Party really is controlled by its moderate wing. In other words, at their Los Angeles convention, the Democrats are doing something almost unprecedented in recent political memory—they're concealing their true centrism.

For, no matter what the giant screen shows, Wellstone is right. Liberal lions like Jackson and Kennedy may know how to give speeches that energize the base, but the action in the Democratic Party is well to their right, with the Democratic Leadership Council (whose former stalwarts include Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and Joe Lieberman) and other hard-core centrists. And the centrists know it; throughout the convention, their triumphalism is palpable. "We've been responsible for the rank and file coming back to this party," boasts DLC founder Al From. "Even if we lose this election—and I don't suspect we will—the movement won't go away." Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, the DLC think tank, says of the relationship between centrists and liberals in the party: "It's a role reversal. We used to be outside taking shots [at them]. Now we're enthroned and they're constantly attacking us."

Simon Rosenberg has witnessed the reversal firsthand. As a student at Tufts University in the late '80s, he founded a middle-of-the-road magazine critical of the campus left. After stints in the Clinton campaign war room in 1992 and then at the DLC, in 1996 he founded the New Democrat Network, a political action committee that funds centrist congressional candidates. At first, he ran the PAC by himself out of his Washington, D.C., apartment. Now he has twelve people working in his Capitol Hill office, and he hopes to raise $5.5 million this election cycle.

The New Democrats, Rosenberg explains to me in the convention center cafeteria, have consciously emulated the

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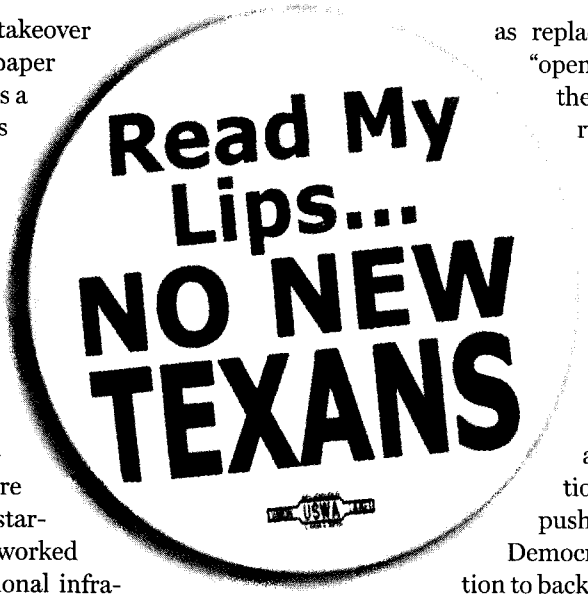
conservative movement's gradual takeover of the GOP. He pulls out a sheet of paper from his black canvas bag and draws a timeline of modern conservatism's rise: "*National Review* to Goldwater to the Heritage Foundation to Reagan. It took thirty years for them to take over the party." He then draws a parallel line for the New Democrats, starting with the founding of the DLC in 1985 and running through Lieberman's addition to the Democratic ticket this month. "This all happened very quickly, much more quickly than on the right," he says, staring down at his diagram. "When I worked at the DLC, I studied the institutional infrastructure of the right, especially GOPAC. You need to fund candidates who support your ideas. We learned lessons from the right, and we borrowed from them."



Of course, the primary liberal complaint against the DLC is that it borrows more than just strategy from the Republicans. And Rosenberg—a 36-year-old who, in his charcoal Brooks Brothers suit and crisp white shirt, looks and sounds like a junior partner at Bear Stearns—fits the stereotype. Not long ago, an aggressive New Democrat like Rosenberg would have felt uncomfortable at a Democratic convention; when he first started the New Democrat Network, in fact, the AFL-CIO demanded that he be barred from meetings of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

That, as they say, was then. Now Rosenberg can't walk five feet across the convention floor without shaking a hand or kissing a cheek. Everywhere we turn, it seems, he's running into a congressional candidate or city councilman or state representative or another "one of the bright young stars we're working with." Making his way through the Florida delegation, for example, he's greeted by the state party chair, the head of the state DLC, and a gruff lawyer from Lakeland named Bob Grizzard. Defiantly wearing a T-shirt from Clinton's 1992 campaign over his checkered oxford shirt, Grizzard tells me he's a "proud member of the DLC." When I ask him about the prominence of liberal speakers on the convention docket, he says, "We're the party of diversity and inclusion," then pauses before adding, "and if they don't want to swallow DLC, we'll stick it to 'em." A minute later, he grabs the shoulders of an African American delegate and pulls him over. "He's not quite with us yet," Grizzard confides to me jokingly, "but we'll give him time." Grizzard's friends are a little embarrassed by the gesture but share his triumphalism nonetheless. "The DLC is the wind in our sails," says Bob Poe, the state party chair.

The thoroughness of the DLC's victory is apparent in this year's party platform—written by a former editor of the DLC journal *Blueprint*. It's a document devoid of any of the old liberal hobbyhorses. There's no call to reduce defense spending or hike taxes and no complaints about globalization or the death penalty. Organized labor and other interest groups were able to score only miniscule concessions—such as replacing the words "free trade" with "open trade." The DLC's triumph was further cemented by Gore's choice of a running mate, which allayed lingering fears that the vice president might not run a centrist campaign. Rosenberg, in particular, is effusive about the selection of Lieberman, who helped him found the New Democrat Network in 1996. "I don't mind saying," he confides, "that I had doubts about Gore and the direction of his campaign." Or, as Will Marshall puts it, "The selection of Senator Lieberman decisively pushed Gore into the camp of New Democrat reform and against the temptation to backslide."

What's more, it's not clear that there's any place to backslide *to*. Throughout the convention, it becomes increasingly evident that even party liberals have mostly acceded to the New Democrat ascendance. Walking down a corridor, Rosenberg engages in a meaningful exchange with an aide to Dick Gephardt. Back on the floor, he shares a friendly handshake with liberal pollster Stan Greenberg. In a DNC skybox above the convention floor, a union official grabs him. "Hey, you stinkin' guy, are you trying to elect all those conservatives still?" But he quickly pulls Rosenberg aside and starts gossiping and joking before asking a favor: "If we can only get Lieberman straight on vouchers, we could get excited. Can you talk to them about that?"

Back in the New Democrat Network suite, where Rosenberg entertains his high-tech donors, we watch Clinton's address. Like Clinton himself, the New Democrats in the room are swept up in a wave of nostalgia for their movement's favorite protégé. When Clinton explicitly uses the words "New Democratic agenda," Rosenberg gives me a thumbs-up. A few minutes later, he doubles over in laughter at the irony of liberal delegates giving an ovation to the president's call for fiscal discipline. "He's just the man. So damn good."

But the scene that so tickles Rosenberg—liberals embracing the centrist mantle—is repeated so often throughout the Staples Center that it becomes almost unremarkable. Jesse Jackson, who used to deride the DLC as the "Southern white boys caucus," pals around with Al From. Even Walter Mondale, who ran for president on a platform calling for radical redistribution of wealth, tells Marshall he's grateful for the DLC's challenge to party orthodoxy. With a rather sheepish grin, From tells me, "Success, I suppose, changes minds—and breeds imitation."

Ultimately, that's why no one here is much worried about the old-time liberals on the speaking schedule. There's little danger that Jesse Jackson and Ted Kennedy will use the podium to recommend raising taxes or to denounce welfare reform. In short, the left's presence on stage not only doesn't threaten the centrists' hold on the party, it actually confirms it. The DLC no longer has to bother suppressing the party's liberal wing; the liberals now do it themselves. ■

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Convention Journal

L.A. Story

By MICHELLE COTTLE

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 2:50 P.M.,
the ballroom of the Long Beach, California, convention center

The shrieks are coming fast and furious: "You're lying!" "Shame on you!" "You're out of order!" "Excuse me! I'm controlling the floor right now!" "No! No! No! New Hampshire!" "Point of order!" "Point of information!" On stage, three befuddled men in suits are trying (and pretty much failing) to bring order to the room. "The chair is not favorable to yelling from the floor!" one of the men scolds the crowd as the seating of the Reform Party delegates threatens to degenerate into a schoolyard brawl.

Oops. Make that the seating of *Pat Buchanan's* Reform Party delegates—an important distinction as of about nine o'clock this morning. Since then, there is no longer one Reform Party convention under way but two. The old guard of the party—led by its anyone-but-Pat candidate, John Hagelin of Maharishi University—marched on the convention center this morning in a (symbolic) attempt to wrest control of the facility from the Buchanan brigades. Turned away by security guards, the group promptly trooped next door to the Performing Arts Center and set up its own convention. "The *real* Reform Party," as the Hagelin forces keep insisting.

The result is two smallish political powwows in total chaos, with much ranting and name-calling. The Reform Party is (or should that now be "The Reform Parties are"?), after all, ground zero for the angry white men and women of America. Forget the disgruntled protesters and Shadow Conventioneers on the outskirts of the Republican and Democratic lovefests. In Long Beach, the cranks *are* the delegates. Already I have been lectured on (shocker) the danger of Zionism, the way both major parties are doing the work of the Bolsheviks, the plot by Ted Turner and the United Nations to install one world government, the paganism of Buddhists, the aesthetic superiority of the Confederate flag ("The American flag is just too busy"), and the dangers of transcendental meditation (of which Hagelin is a well-known proponent). "They're all the same once they start doing that Hindu thing," one Buchananite scoffs.

For those of us who groused about the sunny scriptedness of the Republican convention in Philadelphia, Long Beach, with its authentic animosity, feels like a little slice of heaven. And the dueling Reformers, for all their snapping and snarling, agree that this nastiness proves their party is the only one that still tackles the tough issues. "Don't believe what you hear about this being a petty squabble over personalities in the third party," Bob Roth, Hagelin's press secretary, told reporters earlier. Rather, the Reformers are debating "fundamental differences . . . different visions for what America should be like." Says Buchanan backer Bill Ravotti, "Politics is a contact sport!" Forget the empty slickness of the major party conventions, sniffs one of Buchanan's Wyoming delegates: "We're never going to be like that!"

Probably not. But there is a certain dishonesty to all this piety. Far from engaging in a freewheeling, democratic exchange of ideas, the Reform folk have split into two relatively homogenous factions, each pushing ahead with its own convention in support of its own nominee. There will be no suspense. There will be no real debate. In fact, the whole effect of the split is to make each of the two Reform Party conventions about as spontaneous as the Democratic and Republican ones. It's not exactly participatory democracy in action.

Sure, the results of the electronic voting will be announced tomorrow. But the outcome hardly matters. The Buchanan group has arranged its convention so that Pat has the two-thirds majority of delegates in attendance necessary to set the results aside if they don't go his way. The Hagelin group, meanwhile, has filed multiple complaints with the Federal Election Commission, charging that Buchanan wrongfully manipulated the ballot list. Thus, even if Buchanan wins big, the Hagelin wing of the party will declare that the election was rigged. And, if they can convince the FEC that Buchanan played dirty pool, his team won't see a penny of the $12.5 million in federal matching funds owed the Reform Party. So the Reform Party will have its nominee determined by the FEC, which it has long derided as worthless and undemocratic. And, once the FEC rules, the losing faction will probably appeal to the courts, maybe even the Supreme Court, whose justices Buchanan routinely calls "commissars."

The Democrats and Republicans must be laughing their asses off.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 10:45 A.M.,
Rainbow Harbor

You gotta give Buchanan credit: The man knows how to hold a press conference. In 15 minutes he is scheduled to announce his veep pick. We have been told that it will be someone "bigger than Lieberman." For the occasion,

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Buchanan has gathered us at a lovely little park just across from the convention center. The grass is green. The sky is blindingly blue. Across the waterway, a lovely little lighthouse makes a picturesque backdrop, along with the half-dozen boats docked nearby.

At exactly eleven o'clock, the candidate strides through the crowd, accompanied by a trim, prim black woman dressed in a scarlet frock. A man of action, Buchanan cuts to the chase. This lady (not "woman," mind you) is his choice for vice president: Ezola Foster, mother of three, daughter of a single mom, raised in the 1930s and '40s in Louisiana and Texas. For 33 years, she has been a public school teacher and administrator—for 29 of those years in Watts and South Central Los Angeles. And, as Buchanan feels compelled to mention, Foster is "the first black lady ever to run on a major party ticket in the United States of America!" Get it? She's black, female, and Southern, and she has an intimate knowledge of poor folk. Surely, this is *much* bigger than some Northeastern Orthodox Jewish politico.

Foster, who co-chaired Buchanan's 1996 and 2000 presidential runs, is ideologically simpatico to Buchanan. In addition to her hard-core stance on everything from women in combat ("there's one job for men and men only") to public schools (get government out and God back in), she is a longtime crusader for "immigration reform" who is horrified by "both ... parties' ... welcoming everyone unto our shores." Indeed, Foster doesn't have to worry about any Lieberman-style disagreements with the head of the ticket. Even when asked about the Confederate-flag flap in South Carolina, she toes the conservative line, vehemently explaining that there were two sides to the Civil War—"which had more to do with states' rights than anything else"—and that "the Confederate flag should be honored as part of our history. It's not a race issue." In fact, Foster desperately wants everyone to stop thinking in terms of race and ethnicity. "Stop with all these different groups!" she admonishes, decrying the "balkanization" of our society. Foster, like Buchanan, is disgusted with the two major parties—particularly the Republicans—for playing "the race issue." What was that Pat was saying about "the first black lady ever to run on a major party ticket"?

Perhaps blind to Foster's obvious qualifications, a reporter asks about her readiness to lead the nation in the event that President Buchanan should be unable to fulfill his duties. I don't bother listening to the answer. In the event that Buchanan becomes president, I won't be worrying about the qualifications of his number two. I'll be inspecting ferry schedules to New Zealand.

6:30 P.M.,
cowering on the convention floor

Say what you will about Pat's Reform Party (let's call it "Reform-P") convention: It isn't sugarcoated. Soon after I arrive at the hall, an angry member of the United Auto Workers has the crowd screaming about the North American Free Trade Agreement and permanent normal trading relations with China. Cries of "Treason!" rise from the floor. Next, a small-business owner and "immigration reform" activist from South Central L.A. gets everyone worked up about how black people can't get jobs at McDonald's unless they speak Spanish. And, for the closer, a mother of eight (soon to be nine) runs through a laundry list of national sins: our involvement in Somalia, the social engineering practiced in our public schools, the slaughter of fetuses, and the legions of "elected officials in this country who do not believe that handicapped or disabled persons deserve to live."

The entire evening, in fact, is a photo negative of the major-party conventions. Forget "Morning in America." For these folks, the dawn of the apocalypse is at hand. Even the roll call of states—typically a goofy parade of delegates touting their home states' incomparable cornfields or goat farms—is a dark cataloging of a country sinking into the mire. From Alaska ("which has suffered more than any other state at the hands of unconstitutional federal tyranny") to Delaware ("which is number three in the number of abortions performed per capita"), from Minnesota ("the land of 10,000 lakes and 100,000 taxes") to North Dakota ("where the Endangered Species Act limits ranchers' access to their own land"), our nation has never looked so bleak.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12, 7 P.M.,
watching a half-dozen bagpipe players march
toward the Reform-P convention stage

I feel guilty playing favorites like this and not spending more time with the Hagelin Reformers (call them "Reform-Transcendental"). It's not as if Buchanan has definitively won. When the results of the e-voting gave him a 64 percent victory, the Reform-T folks disqualified him. Still, the Hagelin group is so painfully disorganized that I can never figure out when to be where. As of 3:30 this afternoon, they couldn't even tell me *if* their guy would be speaking tonight.

So here I am again at Pat's conclave, Hostility Central. Thanks to the advance copies of the speech that Buchanan has so thoughtfully provided to his media nemeses, I already know the substance of tonight's rant. The language is characteristically clever and overwrought: "Visigoths and vandals of multiculturalism," "godless New World order," and so forth. Buchanan may be a shameful demagogue, but it is still refreshing to watch an effective orator in action, and, sadly, he's the only one we've got this year. So, I figure, while I'm here maybe I should take a few notes on Buchanan's technique to pass along to the Gore and Bush camps.

In many ways, the performance is brilliant—everything Al and W. are not. Buchanan gestures frequently and smoothly but does not overact (no dorky emphatic fist-pumping à la Gore). He does a beautiful job of varying his tone of voice. He makes all his subjects and verbs agree (and takes care to poke fun at W.'s inability to do so). And, when he feels passionate about a particular topic, he effectively deviates from the script. At one point, Buchanan tells a little story about an encounter with a steelworker in Weirton, West Virginia. His voice is thick with emotion as he recalls the guy reaching into his pocket and offering Buchanan his watch as a gift. Pat tried to refuse, but the miner insisted, saying, "Thank God you're here." The folks seated around me in the press section have no idea what the story means. (Why give Buchanan your watch? Had he been late to the event?) But Buchanan relates it with such emotion that the crowd is enraptured.

There's just one potential flaw. Throughout most of the

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speech, Buchanan is obviously struggling not to break into a broad grin or even an outright laugh. Sure, you expect merriment when he's threatening the Chinese to shape up or else "you fellows have sold your last pair of chopsticks in any mall in the United States of America" or when he pledges "to chop down the IRS until it is so small it will fit into the building that's being vacated by the National Endowment for the Arts." But even in serious moments—such as when he's asserting that, unlike Bush, a President Buchanan would have a litmus test for Supreme Court justices or that "when I step out on that inaugural stand to take the oath, when my hand goes up, their New World Order comes down"—a small smile or chuckle slips out.

It may be that Buchanan's difficulty keeping a straight face is actually crucial to his success. His media friends treat him with kid gloves because they suspect that, deep down, he's just kidding around—that, after a long day bashing Mexican immigrants and rootless-cosmopolitan bankers, he sits back with a glass of Chablis and jokes about all the well-meaning hayseeds who actually believe that stuff. Pat, as much as his hero Ronald Reagan, is a showman. He loves the theatrics of politics. He loves running for president because it's like "Crossfire"—only with more guests. I suspect he's not really all that angry about anything. Which distinguishes him from his supporters, who are a genuinely resentful, bitter, sometimes hateful group. I don't think Buchanan really is a hater. I think he's a cynic, which, to this crowd, is almost certainly worse.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 5:30 P.M.,
a reception for the American Israel
Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC),
Sony Studios, Culver City

The point of this event (heck, the point of every event this week) is to introduce America to the real (i.e., warm, caring, presidential, human) Al Gore. Already a half-dozen warm-up speakers—including Cabinet Secretaries Andrew Cuomo, Bill Richardson, and Dan Glickman—have trooped to the stage to lavish praise on the vice president. But it's Bill and Hillary Clinton who are supposed to do the heavy lifting. And, when Hillary finally arrives, she does a respectable job, making a strong, articulate case for Gore-Lieberman—with a few "and by the way" mentions of her own little race.

When the president takes the stage, however, it quickly becomes clear that he has absolutely no intention of wasting this moment among friends for anything as absurd as stumping for Gore. After a few words about his longtime commitment to Israel and his and Hillary's longtime relationship with Joe Lieberman, the president asks for permission to speak about the Middle East peace process: "You'll hear enough election rhetoric elsewhere," he explains. Somewhere in downtown Los Angeles, a Gore staffer is having a coronary.

And with that he's off, explaining just how hard he worked to bring the Israelis and the Palestinians to Camp David and how much progress was made there. The theme is "Clinton as global peacemaker." (He mentions his role in Northern Ireland and the Balkans as well.) More than that, he hints that he does not consider his high-profile peacemaking finished (more good news for the Gore folks): "We may or may not be able to get an agreement, but we ought to keep trying. I will keep trying every single day." The United States, he assures everyone, "will continue to stand by Israel as we have during my entire tenure as president." I, I, I, me, me, me—you'd think the guy was campaigning for a third term.

Clinton could at least mention Gore's role in *something* related to the Middle East or other peace efforts or, for that matter, any administration achievement of the last year. As it is, I count only three references to the vice president, none of them particularly inspiring. In lamenting various hate crimes that have occurred on his watch, Clinton notes that such tragedies have been "the most heartbreaking moments of the last eight years for me and Hillary—for Al and the whole team." A little later, in talking about the technological advances that bind all of us together ever more closely, he delivers a light-hearted defense of Gore's claim to have invented the Internet (probably not a topic on which Team Gore was hoping to dwell). Finally, he notes that, with plenty of old-fashioned hate still bedeviling us, it's "a good thing Al Gore put Joe Lieberman on the ticket." And, oh yes, near the end he says what a "great comfort" it is to him "that the vice president and Joe Lieberman are running—that Hillary is running." Seconds later, the president heads down into the crowd for a bit of hand-to-hand. Even in the crush around Clinton, you can see his silver mane bobbing merrily as he meets and greets well-wishers. At least one fan has brought an old Clinton-Gore campaign poster for the president to sign. It's a beautiful scene. But I'm not sure what it has to do with getting Al Gore elected.

MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 9:30 P.M.,
waiting for the Y1 shuttle bus.

Opening night at the Democratic National Convention was Clinton night. Oh, sure, the first few hours of the evening session were dedicated to the celebration of women, with chicks of every shape, size, social category, and sexual persuasion appearing on the stage and on the video screens. (When the very out Melissa Etheridge came on to sing a medley of patriotic tunes, I swear I heard Lynne Cheney's girdle pop somewhere in the distance.) But, when you think about it, what could be a more fitting tribute to this president than to put him on the program as the only man amid a sea of women? And—perhaps spurred on by all the estrogen in the air—Clinton rose to the occasion.

The president gave a performance that was passionate, intimate, confident, compelling. He struck all the right notes, particularly in laying out a detailed case for a Democratic administration. (Clearly, a central goal of this week is to highlight the differences between the presidential candidates that Bush has blurred with such success.) And yet.... When Clinton made his pitch for Gore, the shrieks from the crowd were not quite so loud. At times, the applause was little more than polite. The delegates clearly know that Al Gore is their man—that in some ways he may be a better man than Clinton—but knowing it and feeling it are two different things.

Now, as I try to avoid being crushed by the herd of

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delegates headed for the (extraordinarily inefficient) shuttle buses, the disconnect between people's passion for Clinton and their appreciation of Gore becomes even clearer. "It was brilliant," gushes Iowan Camelia Pohl about the president's speech, a look of rapture on her face. "Brilliant," seconds Arizonan Rebekah Friend. Damn term limits, she adds, "I'm very sorry to see him go. I think he's just hit his stride." "He was talking straight to me," says Larry Larson, also of Arizona. "There wasn't nobody else in the building but me," agrees Ted Murphree of Phoenix, who insists that only Martin Luther King Jr. could trump Clinton in the oratory department. "What you saw tonight is the leader of the party of the people." Anne McShane of New York raises a frail hand to her heart, sighing, "Oh, I'm going to miss him.... This speech was outstanding—one of the best I've ever heard."

When asked how Gore can follow such an act, the reviewers don't change their words so much as their tone: more rational, less emotional. The general theme is that Gore is a "different person," but he is a "good man" and will make a great president. At times the praise seems damningly faint: "Gore has been instrumental in everything that happened in this administration," says Friend. "And all Al has to do is stand there on stage and maybe lay out what he wants to do differently." Ben Wulff, president of the Young Democrats at the University of Arkansas, is extremely optimistic about the vice president's chances in November. Still, he sighs, "Clinton is a phenom, and it's unfortunate that Al Gore can't speak like that.... I'm glad they spaced out the speeches like they did."

Of course, Clinton has always inspired intense emotion. Whatever its ultimate electoral success, Gore's more cerebral, workmanlike appeal will presumably prove more, uh, wholesome. "When I went to see Hendrix, I threw my panties on the stage," Friend tells me, still basking in the afterglow of Clinton's speech. "If I could have gotten them off tonight, I'd have done it again!" The president's blowing town not a moment too soon.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 9:20 A.M.,
the back parking lot of the Staples Center

Today is "liberal day," with lefty luminaries Jesse Jackson, Ted Kennedy, and Bill Bradley slated to address the convention delegates this evening. But that's not for another eight hours. What do liberals do at this decidedly moderate convention when they're not getting their token night of coddling? I decide to find out.

My first stop is the protest area just outside the Staples Center, where, last night, the disgruntled hordes held a mini riot. This morning, though, there are only two demonstrators in the massive parking lot set up for their activities. A young woman in a sun hat stands on the outdoor stage and holds forth on the government's sinister mind-control tactics (which, incidentally, Senators Kennedy and John Glenn know all about). Beside her, a silent friend holds a poster on which someone has helpfully scrawled the website address *raven1.net*. The only people witnessing this "rally" are cops milling about just beyond the perimeter of the lot, a half-dozen journalists straggling through the center's rear gate, and some guy on the sidewalk selling LICK BUSH AND DICK 2000 T-shirts.

2:00 P.M., the basement of the Hyatt Regency,
"Malibu A" meeting room

Realizing that out in the streets the world is most definitely not watching, I drop in for the tail end of today's Campaign for America's Future event, "The Progressive Call: The Education Opportunity." The calendar in *National Journal Convention Daily* (the only decent guide to what's transpiring at this disorganized mess of a convention) lists it as a "[d]iscussion and rally for the liberals." Tellingly, neither the room nor the audience is terribly large. After a spiel from Rob Reiner on the importance of early child care, National Education Association President Bob Chase takes the podium. He's a hit. He complains vehemently about people who want to use public money for private school vouchers (can anyone say "Lieberman"?). He laments the inequality in education for the rich and poor and derides the call to close down public schools that underperform. The third time he receives a mini standing ovation for what is a fundamentally unremarkable speech, I begin to suspect I am the only person in the room who is not a teacher. The meeting ends at around 3 p.m. with a plea to return for tomorrow's panel on globalization. God willing, I will be otherwise occupied.

6:10 P.M., back in the Staples Center parking lot

Monday's skirmish with the police seems to have broken the protesters' spirit. (Funny how rubber bullets can do that.) This evening, the crowd is small—maybe a couple hundred people gathered to protest U.S. sanctions against Iraq. On stage, speaker after speaker takes to the mike to loudly vent his or her frustration to a sympathetic crowd. Adding to the racket, surveillance helicopters hover above, periodically dipping low—just to remind everyone who's in charge here. The audience seems composed mostly of college students and twentysomethings mixed in with your usual assortment of nutters and extremists: Jesus freaks carrying crosses on their backs, dirt-caked men mumbling to themselves, fierce Gen Xers distributing copies of the *Socialist Worker*.

This being L.A., even the radical fringe has an entertainment celebrity. In between the screamers, radio host Casey Kasem, of "America's Top 40" fame, rises to condemn the Clinton administration's sanctions policy. But, just as he's launching into a quote by Khalil Gibran, some guy to my right starts shrieking, "Stay away! Don't you touch me!" and swinging a metal crutch at two other (marginally less filthy) men. "I want you arrested! Don't touch me!" In all the hubbub, and with a crutch slicing the air not far from our heads, many in the crowd lose interest in what Kasem is saying.

The anger level, fed by last night's clash with the cops, is so high that I feel as if I were back in Long Beach. But this crowd's fury strikes me as a bit amorphous. In search of a mature spokesperson for the cause, I approach two of the few wrinkled faces in the crowd. Evelyn Schaaf of Marin County, California, has been protesting the decline of our nation since

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about 1933. Her husband, Valmar, started around 1937. For a brief period during that decade, they explain, FDR was compelled to give some social programs to the people in order to keep his government's grip on power, but he didn't go far enough. And, since then, politicians have been working furiously to reverse all of those gains. For almost 70 years! I'd have packed it in by now, but not the redoubtable Schaafs. They try to attend as many protests as they can—and, in this election, they are supporting Ralph Nader for president.

Although much younger, Jeff Rigsby of San Francisco also stands out. For one thing, his T-shirt is unripped and unsoiled. For another, it says GORE-LIEBERMAN. Rigsby is just here for the sanctions rally and will head back to the Bay Area tomorrow. "No one except those on the hard left cares about this particular cause," he says with obvious distress, lamenting the fact that it's difficult to rally middle America when so many of your allies are Trotskyites. "They're smart people, which depresses me. I'm not sure why they've come to the decisions they have."

7:15 P.M., back inside the Staples Center

Making my way toward the press section, I see on the TV monitors that Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg is in the middle of her much-anticipated speech. I pause for a moment to watch the delegates, who are transfixed by the screen. For all their mocking of Republicans' Reagan worship, the Democratic Party still hasn't quite kicked its fascination with the Kennedy clan.

The non-Kennedy portion of the evening's programming featured a litany of libs: Jesse Jackson; Bill Bradley; Elizabeth Birch, head of the gay rights organization Human Rights Campaign; and Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League. (The keynote speaker, Representative Harold Ford Jr. of Tennessee, is the token moderate on the lineup.) It's a depressing display—a high-profile acknowledgment of Gore's problems with the grassroots and of the danger still posed by Nader. "Don't hate us because our presidential ticket hails from the DLC!" Team Gore seems to be pleading. Jackson is the only electric speaker of the bunch, but the crowd (heavily populated by the party faithful) doesn't care. They would whistle and cheer and wave their signs if a Kennedy rose to recite page 63 of the phone book. And, even if the texts of Teddy's and Bill Bradley's speeches are decidedly antiseptic, the fact that these liberal icons are on stage is enough to cheer the folks here. What message the rest of America will take away from tonight's program, of course, remains to be seen. Maybe the Gore people think voters will see it as a sign of strength, a willingness to put controversial faces before the public and let the chips fall where they may (unlike the Republicans, who hid the more conservative elements of their party in the basement). Or maybe they're assuming it doesn't matter who they throw on stage since everyone will be watching "Big Brother" anyway. To be honest, halfway into the Kennedy nostalgia, I begin to wish that's what I was doing, too.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 12:20 P.M., hangar 70 of the Mercury Air Center, Burbank Airport

The omnipresent helicopters have given me a brain tumor. I can feel it now, throbbing, in the oppressive heat of the hangar. Everyone in the room is sweating like a pig. So help me God, if the vice president keeps this crowd waiting, as is so often the MO at these rallies, I will quit my job and go work for the Bush campaign.

The rest of the crowd, though, appears to be in good health and even good spirits. One woman in a red-and-white-striped shirt keeps hopping up and down, pulling at her wild blond hair. When Air Force Two majestically cruises into view, I'm afraid she will faint on the spot. After the usual futzing—dark-suited men fanning out across the tarmac, VIPs amassing at the foot of the airplane stairs, random staffers emerging and disappearing into the plane—Al and Tipper, along with Joe and Hadassah, emerge from the doorway with cheery waves and mile-wide smiles. The crowd roars. The media screams at the revelers to stop blocking the cameras with their homemade signs. All is as it should be.

This is it, folks. Tonight and tomorrow, the Gore-Lieberman ticket will, as they say, introduce itself to the American people. The Clintons have been sent packing. The Kennedys have had their moment. The liberals have been thrown a bone. Now it's all up to the two men actually running. Taking a break from all the kissing and hugging and waving on stage, Gore shares with the crowd a preview of what he plans to say Thursday night. He will address "some of the specific hard choices that I believe we have to make to ensure that we have a bright future," he explains very seriously, then lays out a list of policy specifics that would make any liberal happy: "treat teachers like the professionals they are," "increase the minimum wage," "give medical decisions back to the doctors," "pass hate-crime laws," "support affirmative action," "take guns out of the hands of criminals," and protect our air and water. It's a short speech, received favorably by the crowd, after which Gore works the room for a half-hour or so.

The immediate reviews are upbeat but not glowing. "Lieberman has a gift of rhetoric—and I think Al Gore can learn it," says David Wheatley, the first bystander I grab. "Speeches aren't about brains. They're about emotion." Kevin Jones is also looking for a little more oomph. "I watched both conventions," he says, "and the Republicans are definitely more excited." Still, Jones tries to stay optimistic: "Gore's chances are excellent if, number one, he will loosen up."

That, of course, is what the next two days are all about. Gore doesn't have to magically morph into Clinton and cause the masses to swoon, but he is going to have to unclench a bit and let his personality (whatever that may be) show through. "He's got to be willing to make a few mistakes and not be so polished," says Jones. A couple minutes later, Gore jumps back up on stage to throw a goodbye wave to the crowd. Like the rest of us, he is a wilted mess. His lovely blue shirt is soaked with sweat. His hair is damp. His face is flushed. For the moment at least, in this build-up to the most important day of his political life, he looks almost happy. ■

For additional dispatches by Michelle Cottle, reporting on Wednesday night and Thursday at the convention, visit TNR ONLINE *at* www.tnr.com.

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Questions Large and Small

MANY, MANY screenplays leave us with questions, but few are designed to do so. Philippe Blasband, author of the intriguing **An Affair of Love** (Fine Line), manifestly intended to leave us wondering. Further, the fact that we can never know the answers to the questions is part of the film's reason for being.

It was called *Une Liaison Pornographique* in France, where it was made, but the trouble with that title is that it promises less than the film delivers. If it were pornographic, it would be less interesting. It originates in some (unseen) bizarre sexuality, but the point—or much of it—is that the wild beginning leads to orthodox sexuality.

Set in Paris, the film opens as a woman called She is being interviewed. (No name is given for her or her partner.) She is played by one of France's most intelligent and engaging actresses, Nathalie Baye, best known here from *The Return of Martin Guerre*, whose prime effect always is to make us wish that she was a friend of ours. At the start She is seated in her comfortable home, comfortably answering the questions of an unseen male interviewer, questions about an affair that she has had. Next we go to Him, played by the very gentle, very male Sergi Lopez, a Spanish actor who has been in the Barcelona theater and in French films but who is not yet known here. The same unseen interviewer asks him about the affair, and without embarrassment He shows the interviewer the porno magazine (now laminated!) in which he found an ad that he had answered, an ad that She had placed suggesting unconventional sex. We then swerve to the past, to their first meeting in a café and to the rest of the film, although bits of the interviews recur. In fact, the two interview sites are where the film ends.

When the pair meet in that café, they are not uncomfortable or ill at ease. Both of them are old enough to know what they are doing and to know that what they are doing is odd—not only because they are meeting this way to have sex but to have a kind of sex that apparently they could not propose in their relations with other people. After some polite conversation, She tells him that she has booked a room in a hotel nearby, to which they now go. (The one element in the film that breaches its restrained, almost wistful air is the design of the hotel by Anne Schotte. The hallway is deep red, the room is heavy blue—too declarative for the general quiet tone.)

We do not go into the room with the pair. When they come out, we leave with them and go to the corner where, like two friends who have enjoyed a cup of tea together, they agree to meet again next Thursday. She goes into the Metro; He gets into his car and drives off.

Thursday follows Thursday, with meetings in the café and adjournments to the hotel room, always the same room. (A suggestion here of *Last Tango in Paris*, in which an empty apartment becomes a sexual preserve for two people.) One day before He and She leave the bar, she suggests they do things "normally"—her word—with the proviso that she wants to be on top. He agrees, and it is in that encounter that we get our first glimpses of the pair in bed.

As the affair progresses, our minds play with possible plot twists that may be ahead. A wife or a husband or a same-sex lover is going to intrude. Or these two are going to marry and the last shot is going to be of them walking in the park with a baby carriage. None of this happens. She does tell him after their second or third meeting that she thinks he's a "very decent man," and He obviously thinks likewise of her. At one point she even says that she has fallen in love with him and wants to grow old with him, but this neither overwhelms nor frightens him. They have brief disagreements and ruffles during their meetings, but the only stark event involves another man—an elderly stranger who collapses in the hotel hallway outside their room. They send for an ambulance, then visit the hospital where they meet the old man's wife who, though estranged from him, says she will kill herself if he dies. To their surprise, they read a few days later that the man has died and the wife has kept her word.

Our couple—He and She—may be affected by the Bergmanesque twists in the old couple's marriage, but when they part at last, as they do, it is less because of anything that has happened or is said than because of what each thinks the other is thinking. Their parting has to be final because, after all these weeks, they don't even know each other's name, let alone telephone or address. That parting is a pang for us, but a truthful one: at least it is not a clever "solution." If the unconventional beginning led to a conventional fadeout, it would dim the picture's intent—to add to the mysteries of sexual behavior.

Frédéric Fonteyne, the director, has worked like a master jeweler assembling a fine watch, one delicate spring after another. A Belgian, Fonteyne has made four shorts, all written by Blasband (also Belgian), and one previous feature. *An Affair of Love* shows finesse, perception, reticent control, along with the promise that he will show other qualities as he moves on.

And there are those questions with which he and Blasband have left us. First, most obvious, what *was* that unusual sexual practice for which the pair originally met? More interesting, who was that interviewer? How did he find the pair? Even if he had known one of them, She and He did not have any clue to the other's whereabouts. And why, when they were found, did they agree to answer (most of) the interviewer's questions? We are left with implications of an arching overview of human doings.

In any case, both with the questions it fulfills and those it leaves open, *An Affair of Love* is crafty and well-crafted.

On the other hand, **Space Cowboys** (Warner Bros.) strains throughout to answer every question it raises. Chief among them: How to devise starring roles for Clint Eastwood at his very visibly advancing age? Next: How to justify this latest attempt, which puts the geriatric Eastwood out in space?

The plot was concocted by Ken Kaufman and Howard Klausner, who deserve some sort of medal for bravery under the fire of logic. In 1958 there are four young Air Force test pilots with faces vaguely resembling Eastwood and Tommy Lee Jones and Donald Sutherland and James Garner and with the voices of those men as we know them now. Forty-two years

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later a Russian satellite suffers a breakdown in its controls and will crash into the earth if not repaired. That satellite is equipped with a stolen American control system that only the now-ancient Eastwood understands. His help is sought, and he accepts if he is sent on the rescue spacecraft himself, along with his three former colleagues. NASA agrees as long as two younger men go along as backup.

What a plotty contraption. Admittedly, the whole thing is lacquered with some pleasant crony humor, but the film's greatest adventure is not in the story itself but in daring to tell it. The old-geezers-reunited yarn is familiar enough—e.g., Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster in *Tough Guys*—but out in space! The climax, which of course has to do with technical difficulties up there, has some sizzle, but for my nontechnical eyes the director might as well have slipped in a similar sequence from *The Right Stuff* or any other space drama.

So all the script's creaky questions get creakily answered. Eastwood directed, with his usual economy; and it is nice to see that, in his seventies, he is still working. But his appearance here, as is also true of his pals, underscores a grim fact in the international film world. Male stars have a chance to last. Not women. ■

Martin Filler on Architecture

Goodbye, Columbus

WHAT IS ALL the cheering about? To judge from the rapturous reception of the latest proposal for Columbus Centre, a mixed-use, pretentiously spelled, high-rise development on New York's Columbus Circle, one would think that a major victory for urban design in America has been won. After fifteen years of successive schemes for the site, which differed one to the next only in their degrees of awfulness, we now have the ultimate version by David Childs, chairman since 1990 of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. There is no cause for celebration.

The most recent occupant of the coveted property on the west side of the traffic roundabout between Manhattan's West 58th and 60th Streets—at the chaotic confluence of Broadway, Eighth Avenue, Central Park West, and Central Park South—was the demolition-worthy New York Coliseum. Completed in 1956 according to the designs of Leon and Lionel Levy, and under the patronage of Robert Moses, this banal late-modernist ensemble—a seven-story-high, white-brick-clad exhibition structure joined to a twenty-five story office slab—proved that the legendary master builder had lost his touch by then. As Norval White and the late Elliot Willensky wrote in their indispensable *AIA Guide to New York City*, "Long before [the Coliseum] was outclassed by the Javits Convention Center, it had been relegated to the has-been stage: obsolete the minute it opened."

Yet the land beneath that white elephant is a very tasty morsel indeed, ready for years to be devoured by every commercial real-estate developer within pouncing (and financing) distance. It is poised between the northern limits of midtown and just south of the bustling Lincoln Center area—the latter the scene of the most concentrated and expensive residential construction in Manhattan over the past decade. Thus a revitalized Columbus Circle has the potential for transforming an entire district of the city, especially the stubbornly seedy blocks that lie just to its west.

Created amid the ungainly collision of Manhattan's relentless grid plan and the old diagonal Indian path that became Broadway, Columbus Circle was given its name and its focal feature in 1892, when Gaetano Russo's statue of the explorer was perched atop a column to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of his cruise to the Bahamas. Ever since, this pizza-shaped piazza without a purpose has cried out for architectural coherence. It never got any. Old views of Columbus Circle show a variety of temporary low-rise structures that came and went as opportunity waxed and waned. Several of them were early automobile dealerships (proximity to the park was ideal for test drives), which eventually gave way to more substantial buildings.

From time to time there have been attempts to impose greater order, such as the classical revivalist John Barrington Bayley's quixotic proposal, in the 1950s, for ringing the circle with an elevated, double-column pedestrian walkway in the manner of Bernini's colonnade at the Vatican. The best of Columbus Circle's architecture is the twin-towered, late-Art Deco apartment building at 240 Central Park South, designed in 1941 by Albert Mayer and Julian Whittlesey, the underappreciated masters of multiunit New York housing after the Great Depression. Closely associated with the high-minded circle of Lewis Mumford and Clarence Stein—the reformers who were the heart and soul of humane city and regional planning in mid-twentieth-century America—Mayer and Whittlesey perfectly demonstrated how to integrate street-level shops with high-rise massing. Rising above roof gardens atop the single-story retail units, the sanely scaled towers afford every apartment a maximum of light and air, and in most cases exhilarating views of Central Park. Striking the ideal balance between livability for residents and profitability for developers, this stylish exemplar of high-density urbanism, completed just before civilian construction halted with our entry into World War II, has never been superseded.

FROM THERE, ALAS, it was downhill all the way. At the northern end of Columbus Circle, Gulf + Western Plaza, a cheesy 52-story box designed by Thomas E. Stanley in 1969, has gone from bad to worse. Prone to having pieces of its stone veneer fall off in high winds, the office building from which Charles Bluhdorn terrorized the entertainment industry was transmogrified into the Trump International Tower and Hotel by the eponymous glitzmeister in 1995. With a new reflective gold-glass skin by the ever-accommodating Philip Johnson (to say nothing of the owner's tacky metal replica of the Unisphere from the New York World's Fair of 1964), this meretricious face-lift was more in keeping with Trump's high-roller aesthetic than with the demands of decorum in high-profile public settings.

The oddest addition to Columbus Circle was surely Edward Durrell Stone's Gallery of Modern Art, erected in 1965 and underwritten by Huntington Hartford for the display of his personal collection of paintings by the Pre-Raphaelites, Salvador Dalí, and other nonmainstream enthusiasms. When that erratic Maecenas went bust, this silly little piece of kitsch—a white marble, pseudo-Venetian doodad lifted above an arcade that Ada Louise Huxtable likened to giant lollipops—was

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given to the city. It recently served, ironically enough, as headquarters for New York's department of cultural affairs.

Earlier this year, the Giuliani administration announced its intention to sell Stone's prissy sham palazzo. That set off a wave of inexplicable claims for its merits, none more ludicrous than James Trilling's letter in *The New York Times* asserting that this is "one of the most significant buildings erected in New York in the last half-century." (Never mind Wright's Guggenheim, Mies's Seagram, and innumerable others.) The city received at least two serious responses. The Dahesh Museum (a collection of nineteenth-century Academic Orientalist art remarkably similar to Hartford's exotic tastes, now housed in a former nail salon on Fifth Avenue) offered to return 2 Columbus Circle to its original function, in a renovation to be led by Hugh Hardy, whose firm scrupulously restored Radio City Music Hall to its full Art Deco splendor last year. The other tender, alas, came from Trump, who said he would tear down the old Hartford gallery and replace it with an annex to his hotel across the circle. Since he would not be permitted to erect anything larger than the existing building, which is puny by the standard of his grandiosity, it seems hardly worth the effort. Perhaps he can have the thing dismantled and re-erected at his Taj Mahal hotel and casino in Atlantic City, where it would fit right in with the Arabian Nights tawdriness of that pleasure dome.

Far more crucial to the fate of Columbus Circle, and to the quality of life at the threshold to the Upper West Side, has been the future of the 3.4-acre Coliseum site. In 1985, Moshe Safdie presented his design for a gargantuan, crystalline tower faceted with slanting setbacks. It galvanized community opposition so effectively that the development scheme, which was largely animated by Mortimer B. Zuckerman, came to a screeching halt. The public furor set off by the Safdie scheme focused largely on the shadow that this behemoth would have cast across Central Park, even at midday. In a wonderfully graphic demonstration, hundreds of protesters, organized by the Municipal Art Society and including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, spread out over the greensward and opened umbrellas to simulate the sun-obscuring structure's penumbra, which would have stretched almost to Fifth Avenue.

In 1988, David Childs of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill came up with a new Columbus Circle proposal aimed at assuaging local opinion while still delivering maximum negotiable space to the developers. For a taste of this architect's work, all one had to do was to look eight blocks down Eighth Avenue, where his Worldwide Plaza was then nearing completion. This colossally overbuilt scheme, dominated by a massive peaked tower with the worst height-to-bulk ratio of any skyscraper in recent New York history, was tricked out in postmodernist drag in a futile attempt to disguise its distended proportions. A celebratory documentary film on its design and its construction showed Childs playing around with various vertical surface patterns in contrasting colors, but such palliative strategies were about as effective as advising a 500-pound woman to wear pinstripes.

To be sure, the architects of tall buildings in New York have always been bidden by their clients to deliver the maximum amount of enclosable space that the law will allow. As Philip Johnson, no stranger to fulfilling that imperative, has pointed out, by the time an architect gets his hands on a high-rise project these days, all that remains to be done is to clad the predetermined volume in one material or another and to decorate the lobby. And with the chicanery of air-rights transfers, which permits trading the potential bulk of one building site to an adjacent property that can be pumped up all the more, a mockery is easily made of the zoning regulations that ostensibly guard against

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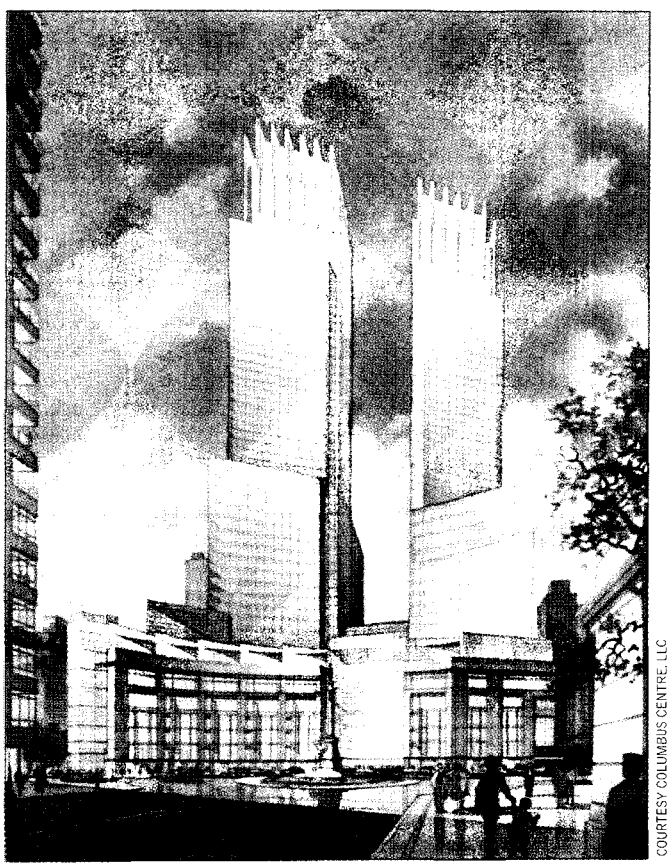
gigantism. Given all kinds of other inducements—Childs's Worldwide Plaza was the result of a well-intentioned city program to lure high-rise construction away from the chokingly congested East 50s and toward Midtown West—it is little wonder that these monstrously swollen hybrids of political and financial cross-breeding burst forth with such predictable regularity.

If one subscribes to the auteur theory of architecture—that there are certain celebrated practitioners whose output is always worth following (say, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown), while others (say, Charles Gwathmey) will never produce anything of interest—then Childs surely belongs in the second category. But he is politically astute and socially well-connected: a familiar player in the New York City government and real estate nexus, a mover in the East Coast power establishment, and a fellow-traveler of the aging architectural avant-garde. In particular, Childs has assiduously cultivated a professional friendship with Frank Gehry, with whom he collaborated in 1987 on a never-executed scheme for the redevelopment of Madison Square Garden. (And Gehry designed one of his signature fish sculptures for a Skidmore, Owings and Merrill hotel in Barcelona in 1989–1992. Odd as that square-hip misalliance now seems, Gehry in his insecure pre-Bilbao days was comforted by the idea of such old-shoe corporate connections, which were often facilitated by Philip Johnson, that nimble procurer of artists for the commercial marketplace.)

In his first Columbus Circle design, Childs took his cues from the distinctive twin-tower format of several 1920s apartment houses on nearby Central Park West by Irwin Chanin (and perhaps from the Mayer and Whittlesey building on Central Park South). That historicizing, populist reference was no doubt calibrated to go down well with the excitable residents of the area. It didn't help. Despite the neo-Art Deco styling of the multi-tower SOM scheme, it was no improvement at all over the monolith proposed by Safdie, who at least displayed the courage of his modernist convictions, even if they were out of control. Childs's heavy-handed postmodernist design was merely another dispiriting sign of his once-dominant firm's sad descent from its glory years under Gordon Bunshaft (the firm's gruff aesthetic supremo during its International Style heyday) and into crass stylistic camp following under Childs. Now Childs is restoring Bunshaft's high modernist Lever House of 1950–1952 in New York, in what seems like an exercise in aesthetic redemption. He needs it, if only to efface the memory of his initial Columbus Circle scheme, a cynical exercise in Gotham-inflected nostalgia that was like *Rhapsody in Blue* squealed out on a toy kazoo.

In several revisions Childs scaled back the greedy hulk, but it was still an ungainly and retrograde conception, with not the slightest spark of imagination. Given the lengthy cycles of boom and bust that affect property development in New York more dramatically than other sector of the local economy, the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the attendant decline in real estate values, made the economics of the Columbus Circle deal less attractive to investors. In money-driven Manhattan, bad times are a far more effective preventive against poor planning than any do-good zoning regulation.



COURTESY COLUMBUS CENTRE, LLC

Columbus Centre, by David Childs, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill

But now, with soaring housing prices and buoyant commercial rents, with buildings shooting up all over town on unlikely sites that have lain dormant for decades, Columbus Centre is being pushed into construction, which is estimated to cost $1.7 billion. The Coliseum has been torn down, the labyrinthine municipal approval process has been virtually completed, but it has taken so long that the period details and the weighty materials of the operative Childs scheme had become too obviously *retardataire*, even for its conservative architect. To keep up with changing times, something he has been all too eager to do since taking SOM down the garden path of postmodernism, Childs went back to the drawing board one more time.

In his present and presumably final version, Childs has sleeked down the exterior in superficial accord with the current fashion for "light construction" (the term that Terence Riley popularized in 1995 with his Museum of Modern Art exhibition of the same name, documenting a widespread tendency toward a neo-modernist high-tech aesthetic). The cast-stone paneling of Childs's 1988 scheme has given way to an opalescent glass skin, and the finicky detailing has been replaced by smooth surfaces. Yet light construction also implies the dual phenomena of weightlessness and transparency; and there is none of the former and little of the latter in evidence here. How could there be, when the fifty-five-story, 750-foot-high project still comprises a stupendous total of 2.8 million square feet?

The irregularly shaped base of the complex, facing onto Columbus Circle, is a busy, angled sequence of right-angled, masonry-clad framing devices cranked this way and that. It will contain "a market-dominant retail venue" called The Palladium, accounting for one-fifth of the project's total area. The prime commercial tenant of that podium structure and the south tower will be AOL Time Warner, including "a state-of-the-art digital television production facility for live transmission of CNN and CNNfn."

A glass-walled atrium, beneath the 85-foot gap between the two parallelogram-shaped towers—the southern one for 203 "super-luxury" condominiums, the northern one for more of the same plus a Mandarin Oriental hotel—will lead to a new home for Jazz at Lincoln Center, designed by Rafael Viñoly, on the upper floors of the base. The dissent over a

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metal-and-glass screen by the artist Jamie Carpenter that will make Jazz at Lincoln Center less visible to the public from the street is misplaced energy. What is really wrong is the architecture that surrounds it, which reduces everything in its path, from the new performance space to the century-old statue of Columbus, to scaleless insignificance. Even the architect of the ghastly Gulf + Western Plaza had the decency to turn its narrow end onto the circle, diminishing its impact to some degree.

In New York, old shtick dies hard, and so Childs was unable to let go of his cherished homage to Art Deco. The tops of Columbus Centre's towers are decorated with a row of vertical metal fins, an obvious reference to Irwin Chanin's Century Apartments of 1931, two blocks away on Central Park West. Childs's feeble salute to a vibrant moment in the city's architectural history underscores just what is wrong with his still-too-big, still-too-clumsy scheme.

Chanin was as commercial as they come, and he was scorned in his prime by high-style contemporaries such as the young Musuem of Modern Art architecture director Philip Johnson; but he retained a sense of obligation to ideals bigger than making a buck. The bloated Columbus Centre, by contrast, conceived amid one era of stupendous prosperity and about to be realized in another, has been a remarkably consistent and thoroughly heartless scheme all the way through. For all its ostensible refinements, this latest assault on civilized city life brings to mind a marvelous Yiddish adage: It is *di zelbe yerte andersh geshleyert*, the same hag in a different veil. ■

The masterpieces the West forgot.

Arrow-Odd and Half-Troll

By NICHOLAS HOWE

The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection
Preface by Jane Smiley
Introduction by Robert Kellogg

(Viking, 782 pp., $40)

I.

MEDIEVAL ICELAND WAS poor in all but stories. The ecology and the economy of the island were so tenuous that even marginal shifts in supply and demand could threaten its inhabitants with hunger. In 1118, the unexpected wintering-over of twenty-seven ships from Norway, with perhaps 800 men aboard, threatened to exhaust the food reserves for the island. As William Ian Miller puts it, this was a "society shadowed by Malthusian crisis." If the difficulty of life in medieval Iceland made for continuous struggle, it also encouraged invention in the ways Icelanders lived and told stories about their lives.

Composed mainly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Icelandic sagas form the first great body of imaginative prose in European literature. Those for whom "saga" is only a melodramatic word will be surprised to learn that the five-volume English translation of *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, published in Reykjavík in 1997, runs to more than 2,200 pages of text. *The Sagas of Icelanders* is a beautifully presented selection of translations drawn from that edition to commemorate the one-thousandth anniversary of Leif Eriksson's voyage to North America; but it still runs to almost eight hundred pages of text and apparatus. Some of the prose sagas include short moments of poetry, customarily delivered as set speeches by characters; these passages are often densely metaphorical and revel in convoluted forms of wordplay that make them almost impossible to translate without extensive notes. The characteristic prose of the sagas, by contrast, is straightfor-

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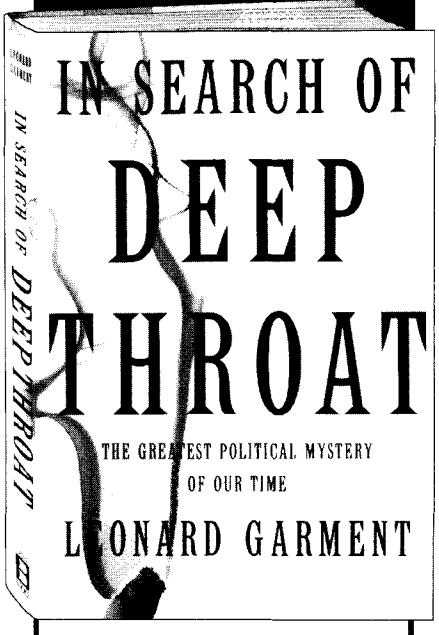
One man had the nation's ear.

Decades later we still don't know who he was...

Or do we?



"Meet me on the park bench in Lafayette Square facing the White House on this date in 2025. I'll be the one holding a first edition of IN SEARCH OF DEEP THROAT. For I suspect it will still be worth reading then."
–Michael Oreskes, Front page review, *New York Times Book Review*

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ward and unadorned, driven more by a clean narrative line than by any taste for verbal decoration. The prose of the best sagas is reminiscent of the functional austerity of the great Viking ships: each has a style calculated to achieve its ends with elegant efficiency.

Our colloquial sense of "saga" as a complicated tale of woe owes something to the medieval genre. The Icelandic sagas are often long; almost all depict varieties of hardship and struggle; and most work with a highly artful sense of narrative. In these narratives, one thing leads to another, the chain of events takes on an inevitable force, and disasters that should be prevented come to seem beyond the powers of human agency to avert. Knowing that disaster must come, one reads on, if only to see exactly how it will play out.

For this reason, sagas frustrate most attempts at paraphrase. To summarize what happens to a character such as Egil or Njal or Gudrun is to risk repeating one dramatic incident after another, because it is events that dominate saga narrative, rather than the descriptions of place or psychological explorations of characters and their motives or philosophical speculation on the meaning of life. The writers of sagas certainly care about all of those matters—otherwise their works would read like comic books or scripts for action movies—but they work such concerns into the texture of the narrative, especially into the terse speeches of their characters.

To make paraphrase even more difficult, sagas often begin far before what seems to be the obvious start of the narrative. Pages of family history will precede the introduction of central characters, because the web of circumstance in which they will find themselves caught must be traced back to acts committed by previous generations. To cite a not unusual instance, it takes about the first quarter of *Egil's Saga* to bring us to the moment when Egil can be born. History in the sagas, it often seems, is ancient history. No character begins life or ends life free of the past.

It is thus no accident that saga writers should be particularly precise about genealogy, as in *Gisli Sursson's Saga*: "Vestein the Norwegian was the son of Vegeir, the brother of Vebjorn the Champion of Sognefjord. Bjartmar was the son of An Red-cloak, son of Grim Hairy-cheeks, brother of Arrow-Odd, son of Ketil Haeng, son of Hallbjorn Half-troll. An Red-cloak's mother was Helga, the daughter of An Bow-bender." To know someone's ancestors is to know the conditions under which he or she will live and, more tellingly, will die. Modern readers are likely to find these genealogical passages a stumbling block, and some previous translations have set them in footnotes to smooth out the storyline. To this book's credit, it keeps the genealogies right where they belong: in the flow of the narrative, to establish how complicated each story is in its range of characters and familial relations as they extend across the northern world.

COURTESY THE SMITHSONIAN

The Stefansson map of the North Atlantic, 1669

II.

THE EXPANSION OF the Norse into Iceland was part of an extraordinary outflow from Scandinavia that began about 800 C.E. The western chain of Norse settlements was determined by sea currents and prevailing winds, first driving seafarers to the island groups of the Faroes and Orkney, then to Iceland, and from there to Greenland and Vinland. The exact location of Vinland remains in question, with possibilities ranging from the Maritime provinces of Canada as far south as the Hudson River. In any event, the presence of Vikings at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern cape of Newfoundland has been established by hard archaeological evidence. The daring extent of Norse exploration and settlement can be found mapped in any history of the period.

There is a more startling way to measure this exploration, as I discovered recently. The day flight from Chicago to London follows the route of the Vikings' North Atlantic crossings once the plane leaves land at the spot where southern Labrador and northern Newfoundland face each other. This is the territory of Viking settlement. Even in the middle of May, the coastline had more than a dusting of snow and the coves were dotted with ice. From 37,000 feet it was hard to know how large the floes might be, but there were surely enough of them to make navigation tricky.

The computer-generated graphic on the Boeing 777 showed us heading out over the North Atlantic with the Labrador Sea to the south and Greenland to the north and east. Traveling 635 miles per hour, the plane was scheduled to land in London in four hours. A Viking ship heading back from Vinland toward Scandinavia would travel perhaps 150 miles on a good day, when winds and currents were favorable. What a jet can do in hours would have taken weeks in an open seventy-foot longship. For those who sailed them, there were no easy roundtrips from Norway to Iceland in a summer or from Vinland to Iceland. Travel took time and patience. It also gave rise to vivid and troubling stories of journeys and their fearsome limits, such as those recounted in *The Greenland Saga* and *Eirik the Red's Saga*.

The Vikings reached the New World before anyone thought to call it by that name; but they also traveled east from Scandinavia into the more familiar world of Russia, and from there down the Volga River and through the Black Sea to Constantinople. Some became mercenaries in the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine emperors, and runic graffiti survive in Hagia Sophia as evidence of their presence. Other emigrants from Scandinavia conquered Normandy—"Land of the North Men"—and from there, in 1066, they invaded England in an intradynastic feud. Yet others ruled Sicily and parts of Ireland. Within two centuries, the Norse had redrawn the political map and the trade map of Europe and its periphery in ways that still affect the way we live and the languages that we speak.

Amid this sequence of invasion and conquest, the settlement—or, to use the indigenous term, the land-taking—of Iceland around 870 stands as perhaps the most innocent moment of territorial expansion in human history. For there were no native peoples on the island to displace. There were only (it seems) a few Irish monks who had left their homeland in search of secluded hermitage sites; and they may well have welcomed the

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coming of the Norse settlers as yet one more test of their religious zeal. As a story, the settlement of Iceland during the Saga age has no stain of dispossession about it, no bloody ancestral guilt of ethnic cleansing.

If the first settlers occupied the island without resorting to violence, their descendants would shape their sagas about living there through accounts of deadly and coldly practiced acts of violence. The sagas record how, in the early tenth-century days of settlement, prosperous Norsemen thought of the new land of Iceland as lying outside the civilized world. A character in *The Saga of the People of Laxardal* dismisses it as "that fishing camp"; and a character in *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* bleakly calls it "that desolate outcrop." (American GIs stationed there in the 1950s called it "the rock.")

Still, like other frontier sites, Iceland could also appear to be a natural paradise. In the words of another character from this same saga, "I have heard good things about the land—that livestock feed themselves during the winters, that there are fish in every river and lake, and great forests, and that men are free from the assaults of kings and criminals." One could argue about the lack of criminals in Iceland; but from the earliest days of settlement through 1262, when the Commonwealth came to an end and Iceland submitted to the royal authority of Norway, the island had no kings or other all-powerful rulers.

It was instead a loosely organized society with regional assemblies and local courts as well as an annual assembly, the Althing, where issues of national significance were addressed and lawsuits crossing regional jurisdictions were heard. The absence of centralized authority gave a sustaining freedom to life in Iceland, as well as a dangerous lawlessness. From these elements the saga writers found their great subject: How are people to live within the bounds of family when feuds and voyages off-island threaten to tear the social fabric to pieces?

WITHIN THIS COMPLEX cultural milieu, Viking and Icelander are not to be confused. The first designated a person engaged in raiding anywhere within the known world of the time, often in the Baltic or along rivers that flow into the Atlantic such as the Seine or the Thames; the second denoted a national identity that was particular to the one island. Icelanders, especially young men just into their physical maturity, could go a-viking, as it is called, but by no means all did. Most who did so saw it as a stage of life, or a rite of initiation into the larger world beyond Iceland, and they were sure that would be followed by a return home and a peaceful life.

Icelanders who went abroad on raiding expeditions were engaged in vital economic work, for they brought back wealth, often in the form of precious metals, that helped to keep the island supplied with necessary provisions and materials. Many other Icelanders lived rural lives, raising sheep, tending crops, and sometimes making peaceful trade journeys back to Norway, where they exchanged their wool and other island products for flour and, most especially, timber to build houses and ships back on tree-poor Iceland.

Eirik the Red in armor, 1688

That the Norse were a peaceful and cultivated folk, rather than the ravenous marauders of the popular imagination, has become a common theme in recent scholarship. (Such a depiction runs through the various essays in William W. Fitzhugh's and Elisabeth I. Ward's *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*, the sumptuous book that accompanied a recent show at the Smithsonian Institution.) This revisionist image has a certain truth to it, for many of the Vikings were more concerned with tending their farmsteads than with raiding for booty. Yet those who did set out to go a-viking were more than capable of wanton cruelty and great destruction. No one gets a name like Eirik Blood-axe from making carpaccio.

Much of the violence and the intrigue in the saga narratives follows from disputes among families or between neighbors. Some sagas are partially set elsewhere off the island, and many include accounts of travel abroad, but throughout them runs a complex network of relatives and neighbors who make up the inhabited population of the homeland. Certain characters recur from saga to saga, sometimes as central figures, sometimes as minor walk-ons, sometimes only as names embedded in the folk tradition or commemorated by places on the landscape.

When the sagas depict killings in Iceland, they tell almost always of people known to each other by face and by name. On the island, at least, there are few killings between strangers, few random acts of violence. Such acts are caused, rather, by too close proximity and too great familiarity—even when, as is so often the case with feuds, these acts have their origins in events committed in previous generations. Proximity in the saga landscape is measured as much by memory as by topography.

Reading these sagas, one is always aware that they are set on a small and marginally habitable island. The endless references to those who have come to or gone from the island, the proud expertise in ships and seafaring, the sense of economic dependency on Scandinavia: all this contributes to the sense of insularity. And still more powerful is the awareness of bounded and confined space in which the Icelanders live and work. This accounts for their need to send sons away when they grow of age, as well as the constant friction between neighbors that over time ignites into feud.

Most of all, one senses that these narratives are set on a small island because everyone seems to know everyone else's business. In such a world, there is little to distinguish genuine news from malicious gossip, as travelers go from one farmstead to the next and ensure a welcome for themselves by telling stories and breaking the monotony of life. In *Njal's Saga*, news of the scandalous divorce between Hrut and Unn spreads quickly, partly because each comes from a good family but mainly because their marriage was unconsummated due to a curse laid on Hrut by another woman that made his erect penis so huge he could not enter Unn.

In our culture, such a story would be headlined by tabloids and talkshows; in medieval Iceland, it spread through word of mouth, and in that way it became part of the island's entertainment. So widely did this story spread, indeed, that it became the basis for a game in which children reenact the legal proceedings of the divorce case. To quote briefly from Magnus Magnusson's and Hermann Pálsson's translation, made in 1960:

> One of the boys said, "I'll be Mord [Unn's father] and divorce you from your wife on the grounds that you couldn't have intercourse with her."
>
> The other boy replied, "Then I'll be

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Hrut and invalidate your dowry-claim
if you don't dare to fight me."
They repeated this several times, and
the household burst out laughing.

Among those present in the household is none other than Hrut himself. He ends the scene by giving the boy who plays Mord a gold ring and telling him: "Go away now, and never provoke anyone again." A useful piece of advice in saga culture, but one rarely followed.

As this brief passage suggests, many of the sagas are very domestic in their settings of home, farmstead, barn, and summer pasturage, as well as in their sense of familial obligation and honor. That children could play games based on their elders' marital difficulties demonstrates just how much Icelanders lived within the domestic sphere. Perhaps the single most haunting moment in all of the sagas occurs in *Njal's Saga*, after Gunnar of Hlidarend has been outlawed, that is, ordered into exile for his part in a long-running feud. As Gunnar rides from his homestead to the ship that will take him off the island, his horse stumbles, causing him to look back at his home and say: "How lovely the slopes are, more lovely than they have ever seemed to me before, golden cornfields and new-mown hay. I am going back home, and I will not go away."

Gunnar's decision to remain on his homeground is nothing less than a self-imposed death sentence, for it means that he has broken the terms of the feud settlement and thus can be killed with impunity by his enemies. But it also demonstrates that the same people who ventured to the edges of the world and beyond could feel a powerful attachment to home.

III.

Sometimes news seems the most precious commodity that anyone can bring to Iceland from abroad: news about power struggles in Norway, or the death of kin in raiding parties around the Baltic, or the pilgrimage of repentant Christians to Rome. These stories were trade goods that made Icelanders feel that they were not living on the edge of the world, in the Thule that was evoked by ancient geographers.

The circumstances of island life, a life wrapped in snow and cold for much of the year, may well explain the flourishing of saga as a genre in medieval Iceland. The practice of reciting sagas and shorter tales during the Icelandic winters would have kept the stories in circulation, promoted an appreciation of the form, and stimulated the composition of new examples. Iceland as a culture valued the power of spoken language as performance, in the prose narratives of the sagas and in the oral pleadings of the law courts. In the finest example of the genre, *Njal's Saga*, prose narrative and legal pleadings merge to prove through a sequence of stories Njal's statement that "with laws shall our land be built up but with lawlessness laid waste."

The gift of language is a sure sign of a character's greatness in the sagas, and a device for complicating what might otherwise seem a one-dimensional being. Perhaps the most extreme instance of this in *The Sagas of Icelanders* is the figure of Egil Skallagrimsson in the saga that bears his name. Warrior, trader, farmer, poet, and killer throughout his long life, Egil is marked from his early childhood as an

Egil Skallagrimsson, from a seventeenth-century manuscript

exceptional speaker: "He became talkative at an early age and had a gift for words, but tended to be difficult to deal with in his games with other children." The last phrase is a masterpiece of Icelandic understatement, for Egil commits his first killing in his seventh year by planting an axe in the skull of a somewhat older boy who handles him roughly during a ball game. Later in life Egil will kill another man by biting right through his throat.

In a life marked by killings and wanderings across the Norse world, Egil shows himself to be also the most gifted of poets. Capable of spontaneously composing poems to mark battles or to display his melancholy, Egil cannot be treated simply as a thug or a sociopath. For him, death and poetry are intertwined in the texture of his life, as here in a stanza from a poem mourning his favorite son: "The sea has robbed/me of much,/my kinsmen's deaths /are harsh to tell,/after the shield/of my family/retreated down/the god's joyful road."

In his eighties, blind and feeble, Egil composes his last verse as he lies beside the kitchen fire:

Time seems long in passing
as I lie alone,
a senile old man
on the king's guard.
My legs are two
frigid widows,
those women
need some flame.

These words belong to a warrior grown old, to a man who once lived within his physical strength, but who now can only hope to battle the world to a standstill with language. And it is language stripped down to the most direct speech, as if he has no breath to say more.

It is by their use of language that the saga characters define themselves, and hold their claim on our attention after seven or eight centuries. This gift of language is shared, remarkably enough for the literature of a traditional society, by men and women. It would be quite easy to argue, in fact, that the most arresting character in *The Sagas of Icelanders* is Gudrun Osvifsdottir, from *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*. Through four marriages and an unfulfilled love for yet another man, Gudrun is a figure of great personal force, even charisma. In a world where loyalties can quickly became entangled, leaving characters hopelessly torn between various allegiances, Gudrun manipulates those about her to achieve her desires. As she grows older, she comes to grieve for her ruthlessness and embraces the newly introduced religion of Christianity so ardently that she becomes the first nun in Iceland.

In the final scene of the saga, Gudrun is visited by her adult son Bolli, who asks her: "Will you tell me something, Mother, that I'm curious to know? Which man did you love the best?" She evades the force of his question by speaking in turn about each of her husbands, but Bolli presses the question on her again. Finally she answers, in a single, unsparing line worthy of Penelope or Cordelia: "Though I treated him worst, I loved him best." After a lifetime of conflict, violence, despair, and then religious conversion, there can be some measure of self-knowledge. It may take the saga writer almost a hundred and fifty pages to set up her last line, but it yields a dramatic moment that is unforgettable.

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Confronted with a bookful of sagas, the reviewer is forced to highlight the dramatic moment, because working through the plot is far too complicated for such an occasion. But this is not too much of a distortion, because this is in fact the way one reads sagas: by working through the slow, careful accumulation of details and events that lead to a moment of resolution. In the case of Egil and Gudrun, this moment turns on a matter of self-understanding, a summing up of a life. In other sagas, however, the decisive moment extends beyond the self-reckoning of an individual to embrace the fate of a group.

When Eirik the Red and his company stumble on Vinland, having been blown far off course, they discover a land that seems paradisial in its fertility: "Fields of self-sown wheat and vines were growing there; also, there were trees known as maple, and they took specimens of all of them." For those who had lived hardscrabble in Iceland and Greenland, this new land seemed to overflow with all of the abundance that they missed at home: riches of grain, grapes, timber. But there would soon be trouble in paradise. As would also be the case when later Europeans encountered an edenic New World, the Icelanders could find no peace there. They came first to fear the attacks of the natives of the land, people they called the Skraelings. And then, one morning, the Icelanders saw a strange creature coming toward them. It shot an arrow through the stomach of Thorvald, Eirik the Red's son; and after pulling it out, he remarked tersely: "Fat paunch that was. We've found a land of fine resources, though we'll hardly enjoy much of them."

The Icelanders recognize this strange creature as a one-legged man. He belongs not to the exotic fauna of the New World, as a modern reader might guess, but to the familiar monstrosities of the ancient Latin tradition of natural history. The Vinland creature is a Uniped or a Shadow-foot, a denizen of the Libyan desert who protects himself from the heat of the sun by lying on his back and lifting his foot above him as a parasol. In the Latin tradition, the presence of the Uniped signals the back of beyond, the place where human beings cannot live without great peril. In its deformation of the human body, the Uniped displays what happens to those who go too far into the unknown, who lose all connection to their homeland.

When the Icelanders see the Uniped, they know that they have met their decisive moment. Vinland must be forsaken, the paradise of wheat and grapes must be left behind, because it lies too close to the Land of the One-Legged. The high drama of the moment is signaled, within the stylistic conventions of the saga, by Thorvald's laconic remark about his gut.

IV.

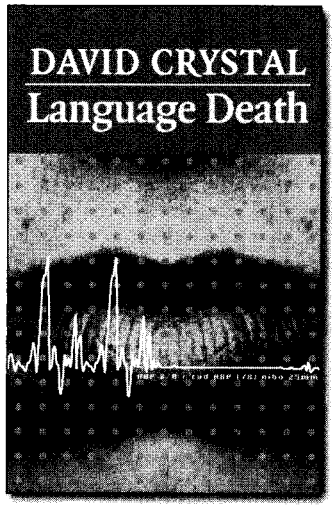
All of this book deserves careful reading—all of it except the tedious preface by Jane Smiley. It is riddled with such earnest banalities as: "In every saga, the fates of men turn on small moments and misjudgements, very distinctly rendered. That is a lesson for every novelist." Or, more stupefyingly: "To me as a citizen and a novelist, the worth of serious art as a form of social discourse seems evident in the enterprise of Icelandic prose literature." The Icelandic sagas are too murderously honest to need this kind of pious boosting.

But Smiley's boosterism raises the interesting question of why the sagas are not better known or more deeply ingrained in the European canon. Consider, as an example of this neglect, the fact that Erich Auerbach passed them over in 1946 in *Mimesis*, his otherwise encyclopedic study of realism in the Western tradition. It would be hard to cite a comparably glaring omission in his book. Had Auerbach included a chapter on the sagas, among those devoted to Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Balzac and the like, he would have located a particular form of realism much earlier in the canon than he did. Perhaps he neglected the sagas because he lacked editions of them in his exile in Istanbul. More likely, he did so because the sagas have never been part of the classical or nationalist curriculum of Western Europe, though they have remained centrally alive in modern Icelandic culture.

The sagas had the misfortune not to be composed in verse, the honored medium for early literatures. Before the rise of the novel, prose seems largely a utilitarian medium better suited to the literal accounting of events than to the imaginative recreation of them within crafted narratives. Similarly, the sagas had the misfortune of being treated until recently as historical sources for the early centuries of Icelandic history, instead of being interpreted as works of historically informed literature. When badly translated, the sagas seem very diminished indeed, and they read as little more than genealogical catalogues and chronicles of mindless feuding.

Most of all, the sagas have not been widely read or taught simply because they come from Iceland, from the periphery, from a marginal culture and a marginal language known only to its native speakers, from a landscape of glacial ice and volcanic lava that does not draw visitors in search of the quaint or the charming.

Language Death
David Crystal



A leading commentator and popular writer on language issues, David Crystal asks the fundamental question, "Why is language death so important?", reviews the reasons for the current crisis, and investigates what is being done to reduce its impact. By some counts, only 600 of the 6,000 or so languages in the world are "safe" from the threat of extinction. By some reckonings, the world will, by the end of the twenty-first century, be dominated by a small number of major languages. *Language Death* provides a stimulating and accessible account of this crisis, brimming with salutary and thought-provoking facts and figures about a phenomenon which—like the large-scale destruction of the environment—is both peculiarly modern and increasingly global. The book contains not only intelligent argument, but moving descriptions of the decline and demise of particular languages, and practical advice for anyone interested in pursuing the subject further.

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Our bestseller lists do not feature picturesque travel accounts of summers in Iceland as they do of Provence and Tuscany. To admit to a taste for the sagas with their harsh speaking and graphic violence might seem a bit like slumming. In the twentieth century, only British poets with a liking for rocky landscapes, such as W.H. Auden and Ted Hughes, have shown much enthusiasm for the sagas.

AT THEIR BEST, however, the sagas belong with the most memorable of medieval works: with *Beowulf*, with the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, with Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, perhaps even with Dante. It is thus all the more regrettable that this volume, so well-designed for the general reader, should leave out *Njal's Saga*, the subtlest and most poignant of them all in its unsparing admission of the human costs exacted by violence. Perhaps it was omitted because it is not entirely characteristic of the genre in this regard, or perhaps because it is very long. By the same reckoning, though, one could drop *Hamlet* from an anthology of Elizabethan drama. Readers who work through all of *The Sagas of Icelanders* and want more, though, will be in the enviable position of having the best ahead of them, whether they read *Njal* in the translation by Robert Cook in the *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* or in the older Penguin version by Magnus Magnusson and Herman Pálsson.

The translations throughout *The Sagas of Icelanders* read smoothly and accurately. Some, such as George Clark's version of *The Saga of Ref the Sly*, are very adept at capturing the verbal pyrotechnics of the original. On the whole, though, the translations here are plainer and less novelistic than those done by such earlier translators as Magnusson, Pálsson, or Gwyn Jones. For those of us who grew up reading the sagas in their versions, the plainer style of *The Sagas of Icelanders* can sometimes seem a bit too understated or flat at dramatic moments. Consider, for example, the words that Bolli speaks to Gudrun after she answers his question about which man she loved best. Here is the passage in the version by Keneva Kunz, from *The Sagas of Icelanders*: "'That I believe,' said Bolli, 'you may say in all sincerity,' and thanked her for satisfying his curiosity." And here it is, in the version by Magnusson and Pálsson: "'I think,' said Bolli, 'that the truth has now been told.' And he said she had done right to tell him what he had been so curious to know." I think of saga characters as speaking more vividly and more forcefully than they sometimes seem to do in this new volume.

Still, nobody will be led significantly astray by these new versions. In some ways, moreover, readers may gain a better sense of how the sagas relate to each other in their time and place of composition if they meet them in *The Sagas of Icelanders* than if they find them in separate versions. Reading all these narratives in a single book brings one about as close as one can now be brought to the saga of sagas that medieval Icelanders carried around in their memory. As a matter of editorial practice, key terms and names have been regularized across all of the translations in this volume, so that readers can appreciate more fully the overlaps and the connections among the individual sagas. Robert Kellogg's introduction is a model of accessible scholarship; it assumes no prior knowledge on the part of readers but tells them what they need to know, and it does so with courtesy. The maps, the diagrams, the glossary of cultural terms, the historical tables, and the index of characters at the end of the volume will be very helpful to even the most experienced reader of sagas.

If the millennium of Leif Eriksson's voyage to Vinland gives us nothing beyond *The Sagas of Icelanders*, it will be worth celebrating. Perhaps, amid the faded hype of the year 2000, the publication of this volume will encourage readers to explore the sagas and, by doing so, will help to set them in their rightful and particular place in the canon. Driven by the inevitability of events, fierce in their depiction of the relations between men and women, the sagas speak with a starkness that has no match in Western literature. ■

Leprous Spawn

By RICHARD JENKYNS

Bosie: A Biography of Lord Alfred Douglas by Douglas Murray

(Talk Miramax Books, 374 pp., $27.50)

DOUGLAS, WELL-BORN, talented and handsome, after an education at one of the best schools in England, came up to Magdalen College, Oxford, and while still an undergraduate made his mark upon the English literary scene. That is the story of Alfred Douglas, the subject of this biography; and it is the story of Douglas Murray, its author. He began the book as a schoolboy of sixteen, and at the time of publication he was still only twenty, but no allowances need to be made: this is an entirely professional piece of work. Perhaps the only sign of Murray's extreme youth is his shocking claim that Lord Alfred Douglas did not marry until middle age. (He was thirty-one.) One is reminded of Saki's Reginald: "To have reached thirty is to have failed in life."

Alfred Douglas had failed in life a good deal earlier than that: he was only twenty-four in 1895, when the trial of Oscar Wilde plunged him into the disaster from which he never recovered. Bosie (the nickname by which he was universally known, derived from a childhood mispronunciation of "boysie," little boy, his mother's pet name for him), is hardly remembered today except as Wilde's lover, but he was to have a later and checkered career as a magazine editor, a litigant, a jailbird, and a poet. He lived on until 1945.

He has usually had a very bad press, and is commonly regarded as the malign influence who drew the martyred Wilde to his doom. His career in middle life as a polemical and anti-Semitic journalist has excited only contempt, or perhaps ridicule; and his verse has been dismissed as mediocre and dated. Murray thus has a triple task of rehabilitation: he puts up a spirited defense of Bosie's conduct towards Wilde, and makes substantial claims for the poetry, and asks for understanding. The paradoxical truth seems to be that Douglas was in many respects a very unpleasant man and that he has been traduced.

Douglas's reputation as the Mephistopheles to Wilde's Faust derives from three sources: *De Profundis*, the vast epistle that Wilde wrote in prison; Douglas's quarrels with most of Wilde's friends after his death; and *Oscar Wilde and Myself*, the diatribe published under Douglas's

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name in 1914, but in reality mostly ghosted by T.W.H. Crosland, journalist, hatchet man, and bigot. Murray establishes, I believe, that Douglas did not behave badly to Wilde in his lifetime. If anyone was the corrupter it was Wilde, who first made sexual advances to Douglas at their second meeting. Douglas was a blond beauty with blue eyes and a petulant mouth, and Wilde was by then a "wobbly blancmange" (the unflattering description of a girl who had watched him trying to play tennis).

Douglas seems to have been basically heterosexual, with a strong pederastic streak, which was essentially the prolongation of an adolescent homosexual phase into early adulthood. He had his first affair with a woman before coming up to Oxford. He did not enjoy sex with Wilde (though they do genuinely seem to have loved one another). This may be why Wilde introduced him to the squalid world of rent boys.

Since he suffered so much, Wilde tends to be given an easy ride; but it should be remembered that he was party to the corruption of teenagers, whom he persuaded to sell their bodies to the wealthy for money. It is an irony of our times that behavior with boys is excused of a kind that would surely be condemned if the victims had been, say, Asian bar girls. Wilde and Douglas did not restrict their prey to the lower orders. On one occasion, Douglas seduced a sixteen-year-old of good family, who allegedly slept with him on Saturday, with Wilde on Sunday, and had a woman supplied to him at Douglas's expense on Monday. Douglas missed the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest* because he was in North Africa making love to a boy of fourteen, beautiful as a gazelle.

Murray shows that when Wilde faced disaster, Douglas stood by him. Wilde brought ruin on himself by suing the Marquess of Queensberry, Douglas's father, for libel, after Queensberry had left the famously misspelled message accusing Wilde of "posing as a somdomite" (or possibly of being a "posing somdomite"—the Marquess's quivering rage added illegibility to poor orthography). This gave Queensberry the chance to expose Wilde's activities in open court. The authorities were left with no alternative but to charge Wilde, but even so deliberately gave him time to flee the country, a chance that he threw away.

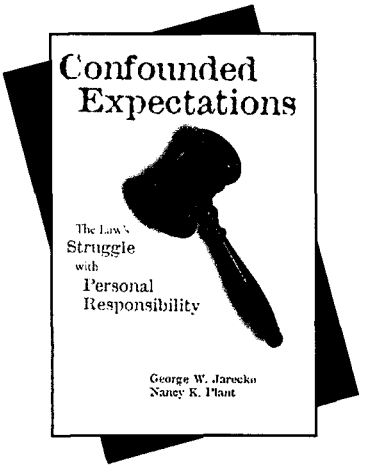
Douglas was at risk of facing the same charges, but he stayed in England after Wilde's arrest, and visited him in prison devotedly. He was ready to go into the witness box on his friend's behalf, and only reluctantly accepted the need to go abroad. After Wilde's release, the two men met up again, and lived together for a while on Douglas's money. It was while during this time that Wilde wrote his last work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Why, then, did he attack Bosie so violently in *De Profundis*? The best answer seems to be that he was unhinged by his tribulations. *De Profundis* is described by Murray as "in places ... the most degrading document ever to come from [Wilde's] pen," and rightly so. It is deplorable, aesthetically and morally. Florid, posturing, narcissistic, and insincere, it strangely makes real suffering appear phony. And its assault on Douglas is an act of deep ingratitude, forgivable only because of Wilde's state of mental collapse. After his release, Wilde told his friend Robert Ross that Douglas was living off his money; but this was simply a lie, a reversal of the facts, and difficult either to explain or to palliate.

Yet Douglas had also himself to blame for his notoriety. One is tempted to say that he was his own worst enemy, but perhaps he was too widely and deeply hated for that. For complicated reasons, he was unaware of the existence of *De Profundis* in Wilde's lifetime, though it is notionally a letter addressed to him; and when he found out the truth, he was naturally appalled. Still, *Oscar Wilde and Myself* is, to use Murray's own word, a despicable book, and it damaged Douglas immensely.

DOUGLAS CAME OF a family accustomed to extreme violence in word and action. In the view of one observer, "anything short of murder in the Douglas family is a source of congratulation." Lord Queensberry seems to have been virtually deranged; his chief interests in life were militant atheism and feuding with his children. As his war with Wilde approached its climax, Bosie warned his father that he was armed and would shoot if necessary. Queensberry prowled round London with a horsewhip, and Bosie with a pistol, which went off accidentally while he was dining at the Berkeley. Queensberry had to make do with fisticuffs with Percy, another of his sons, in a London street. On his deathbed he had just enough strength to spit at Percy and be received into the Roman Catholic Church.

That blend of exspuition and the odor of sanctity was to characterize Lord Alfred, who himself became a Roman Catholic in 1911. He was one of those converts, like Evelyn Waugh, who managed to be fervently Catholic while seeming barely Christian at all. Religion enabled him to mix vitriol and spiritual one-up-manship into an intoxicating cocktail. He told André Gide that he was a "poor wretched



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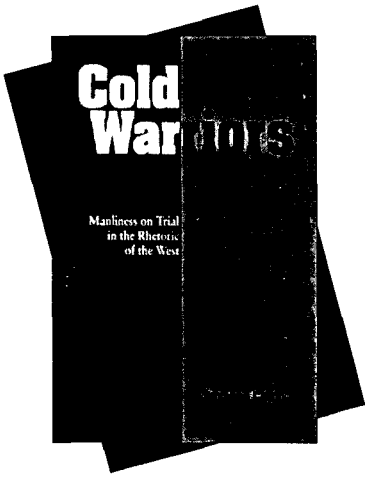

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creature," a "frightened cad" who had written an "ugly, squalid and boring" book; but luckily Douglas was so charitable that he would remember Gide in his prayers. Another man who incurred Douglas's displeasure was assaulted in a sonnet entitled "The Traitor;" sublimely innocent of self-awareness, the poem explains that the fellow is a sycophantic Judas, but Douglas is too noble to breathe a word of complaint.

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Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas, Naples, 1897

Douglas prayed every day (or so he said) for people to whom he was at the same time sending letters of poisonous abuse. He was also heroically snobbish. He told the Duke of Richmond that he was "descended from the bastard son of a French whore" and the Prince of Wales that his family had usurped a throne which his own ancestors had declined. One of his sonnets ends with the declaration that "the Douglas knee" would bow to no one except Christ, whose father presumably made the grade.

In his middle years Douglas was editor or co-editor of several more or less short-lived magazines, usually containing a good deal of political and religious bigotry. He was unlucky enough to be on the winning side of a libel action in 1909: this success encouraged him into a decade and a half of extraordinary litigiousness, in which he was constantly in and out of the courts, either suing on his own account or publishing such outrageous material that its subjects were driven to sue him. He also had supernatural support. Pursuing his feud against Wilde's friend Robert Ross, he met a blond child who led him to a useful witness; he realized afterwards that it had been an angel. After he won a thousand pounds from the *Evening News*, which had published an obituary of him following a false report of his death, he attributed his victory to the intercessions of Sister Mary Vincent of the Convent of Mercy at Hull and the daily prayers of the children in her charge.

His anti-Semitism was crackpot. Winston Churchill, he explained, had conspired with the Jews to murder Kitchener, drowned at sea when the *Hampshire* went down in 1916. When he added the claim that Churchill had falsified reports of the Battle of Jutland so that a group of financiers could bring off a coup on the stock exchange, Churchill sued, and Douglas was sentenced to six months for criminal libel. In prison he wrote *In Excelsis*, a sequence of sonnets. One begins

> The leprous spawn of scattered Israel
> Spreads its contagion in your English blood...

and it gets no better.

When the *In Excelsis* sequence was published in the *London Mercury*, the editor refused to include the above sonnet and three other poems. All "decent" people were shocked when he had written an outspoken defense of homosexuality after Wilde's imprisonment; all "decent" people were shocked by his anti-Semitic fantasies. It is disconcerting to think that both pieces of writing—the one calling for tolerance, the other intolerantly vile—were equally the product of a kind of reckless courage.

When Yeats excluded him from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, Douglas told Yeats that he had shown the jealousy of a minor poet toward a major poet. Murray wants to make high claims for at least the best of Douglas's verse, but I don't think he succeeds. It is unfortunate for Douglas's reputation that he had so wildly exaggerated an idea of his importance in the scheme of things. He made it clear that he considered himself the finest sonneteer in the English language, except perhaps Shakespeare—but then the Shakespearean sonnet was so much easier to write than the Petrarchan form in which he himself specialized.

Douglas showed a fair degree of technical accomplishment, but even so, it is hard to see that he had at best anything more than a very minor talent. Murray describes the poem "A Prayer" as "a simple and direct statement of faith"; it ends,

> Angels have beckoned me unceasingly,
> And walked with me; and from the sombre skies
> Dear Christ Himself has stretched out hands to me;
> And I was not. Oh! open Thou mine eyes.

This wants to be humble but it cannot suppress its self-importance. We hear the voice of one who moves in the best spiritual circles, who is constantly interesting to the angels—"the dear Duchess herself...": that is almost the tone. The title *In Excelsis* was of course chosen to contrast with *De Profundis*, but the two prison writings are all too similar in their narcissism. Murray greatly admires *In Excelsis*, but not only is the style too lush, the sentiments are also too self-regarding, and the poet's voice is too pleased with itself. The story it tells is of a suffering hero, superior to the rest of the world. Douglas's vanity was a moral flaw that became an aesthetic vice.

It is impossible to tell whether Bosie, talented and beautiful, might have led a successful life had he never met Wilde, or if "the fatal Douglas temperament" (his mother's phrase) would have got him one way or another. His life was desperately sad. The scandal of 1895 embittered him forever. His marriage broke up; his only child became schizophrenic and spent most of his life in an asylum; he quarreled with almost everybody. Murray tells the story of his decline into a shabby-genteel poverty in a town on the Sussex coast with an unobtrusive eloquence that allows one to feel sorry for the man, though I find it impossible to share the belief that he was lovable. He cannot be remembered except as a failure. While at Magdalen he had written an essay for a student magazine, entitled "An Undergraduate on Oxford Dons," dismissing these fusty figures with the airy flourish: "Let us forgive them, but forget they exist." It might be kindest to apply the same injunction to him. ■

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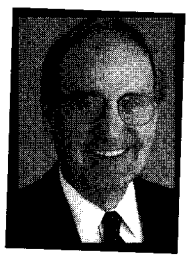

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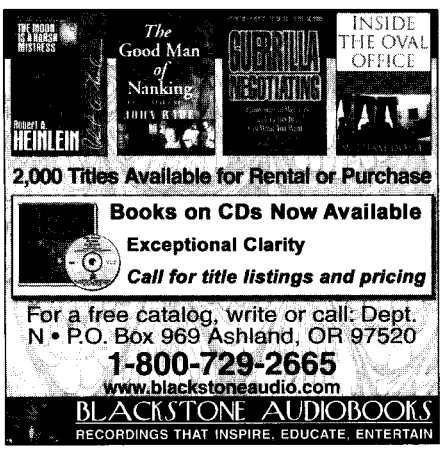
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The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas about White People, 1830–1925 by Mia Bay

(Oxford University Press, 256 pp., $19.95)

Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries by Orlando Patterson

(Civitas, 264 pp., $29.50)

IN *The Content of Our Character*, Shelby Steele described what he called a new "public choreography of black and white" under integration. He recalled a dinner party on a "warm, windless California evening," with a racially mixed group mellowed out over a "lovely" meal, drinks, and trusting self-disclosure. Then a jarring note rang out. A black engineer turned the conversation to the issue of race with "accusation in his voice." He spoke of his irritation that his daughter is only one of three black children at her school: "I didn't realize my ambition to get ahead would pull me into a world where my daughter would lose touch with her blackness." The effect of this assertion was stunned silence, but the man persisted in his truculent demeanor. Awkward and at a loss for what to say, the guests soon left. This was Steele's autopsy of the party: "death induced by an abrupt and lethal injection of the American race issue."

Steele interpreted this scene as a reenactment of the "harangue-flagellation" ritual so well known at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, when the civil rights movement had shifted to the more militant notions of black power and black identity. He forsakes and chastises such behavior now—despite occasionally getting a faint "itch" for it—but at the time he, too, enjoyed the "cheap thrills" to be gained from intentionally provocative behavior or incendiary talk about race, particularly in interracial settings. In those days, "it was such great fun to pinion some professor or housewife, or, best of all, a large group of remorseful whites, with the knowledge of both their racism and their denial of it."

In Steele's account, such behavior was simply a means of pulling rank—"a power play"—by inducing white guilt. But there is nothing simple about it today. It has instead become part of a larger and even more troublesome attitude that Steele associates with the insecurities and the crises of confidence in the black middle class's adaptation to integration. In recent decades, racial anxiety has been transformed into an unanxious racialism, as many blacks seek a way of holding onto race rather than risk being judged by universal measures of character or achievement.

Whatever one thinks of Steele's explanation, it would be difficult for a conscientious observer of contemporary American culture to deny that the "harangue-flagellation" ritual and other such scripts have become "part of the texture of integration." To be sure, we can also laugh at such scenes, as popular culture makes abundantly clear, and the premature death of a mellow night of California self-disclosure may not be not such a bad thing. Yet not all the rituals of race under integration are so benign. Nor are the consequences of those rituals insignificant. They can seep into our thinking and set the terms in which events or behavior is understood. They influence everything from how the problems of the black family can be discussed to the images of black men in the media. They affect, and sometimes severely compromise, the effectiveness of movements to improve race relations and living conditions for African Americans.

Indeed, an exploration of racial rituals broadly conceived—our unwritten expec-

ELISABETH LASCH-QUINN's book *Race Experts* will be published by Norton next year.

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tations, our taboos, our notions of proper etiquette—helps to pinpoint the ways in which we have failed thus far in some of the most important tests of integration. As a society we have perpetuated a kind of cultural lag, refusing to let go of codes and scripts for social behavior that carve out particular roles for blacks and whites—and erecting in some places a differential code of etiquette of sorts. While the civil rights movement sought to end any association between race and manners, to universalize expectations and treatment, and to do away with double standards, newly emergent codes of racial difference are now one of the obstacles that still stand in the way of our addressing and moving beyond the race complex that we have inherited.

Of course, the problem of bridging equality and difference has become a major preoccupation of our time, and not just as concerns racial issues. If we cannot seem to get a handle on the question, it may be because we are not content, like earlier generations, to stop at philosophical resolutions. And our inability to address this issue is making us exaggerate the importance of our differences, and even creating artificial differences.

THERE IS AN irony, certainly, in the persistence of such themes in a society that just one generation ago underwent the civil rights revolution. That great movement not only tore down the legalized caste system that relegated blacks to a segregated and inferior social status, and attacked informal discrimination; it also delivered a frontal assault on the entire cultural apparatus that legitimated Jim Crow and de facto segregation with its rigidly differential treatment and protocol. Building on important precedents of earlier agitation, the movement exposed the gothic race-sex complex that lay beneath the rigid Southern social etiquette of white supremacy, in which a misplaced glance could result in the terrors of a lynch mob. At the same time, the civil rights movement questioned the North's conceptions of racial and ethnic turf that made unwitting trespass, even by a child at play, explode into recrimination, retribution, and riot.

The civil rights era made it common knowledge that race relations had become ritualized under the violent reign of slavery and segregation, and that the etiquette of race managed to maintain a brutal grip on everyday social life. The crusade of the 1950s and 1960s sought to confront the nation's crimes against humanity by rooting out the double standards ingrained in every aspect of daily life: separate and inferior schools and public facilities; lies and myths about black inferiority perpetuated under the banner of hard science and social science; unshakable rules for behavior that maintained a rigid social hierarchy. The totality of white victimization of blacks expressed itself not only in economic and political arrangements, but also in daily codes of conduct, which black parents were forced to teach their children for sheer survival. Generation after generation was thus socialized anew into the unfair, dehumanizing world that was once America.

The ritualized nature of race relations prior to the watershed of the civil rights movement has already been well documented. Drawing on theoretical insights from anthropology and psychology, historians such as John Blassingame, Lawrence Levine, and Eugene Genovese sought to articulate the significance of the master/slave relationship by examining unspoken assumptions and expectations, roles and patterns of behavior, and the function of institutions such as religion and festivals. In *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (1982) and *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (1986), Bertram Wyatt-Brown illustrated the larger "moral code" of white Southerners—a worldview based on a belief in the "rule of honor"—in which slavery was embedded. Since the 1960s, the explosion of scholarship into slavery has built on earlier efforts to unearth the workings of its distinctive social and cultural apparatus, efforts dating back to the direct observations of the evil system's contemporaries, such as Frederick Douglass. And contemporaries of Jim Crow such as Ida B. Wells and later Jessie Daniel Ames elucidated the peculiarly ritualized nature of racial oppression in their separate battles against lynching by questioning its stated rationale, the protection of white womanhood.

In 1937, the black sociologist Bertram Doyle spelled out in minute detail the expectations for interracial social interaction in *Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*, as did John Dollard in *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, which appeared in the same year. The subsequent scholarship of W.J. Cash, C. Vann Woodward, I.A. Newby, George Frederickson, and more recently Glenda Gilmore and Eric Lott analyzed these rules and rituals, placing them firmly in their context of the power relations of white supremacy. And now Mia Bay points us back to this terrain.

Seeking to uncover the patterns of thought about race, the images of whites that blacks held, and the terms of the "intellectual contest" between blacks and whites during slavery and segregation, Bay's premise is that the racial ideology of blacks is a missing piece of our under-

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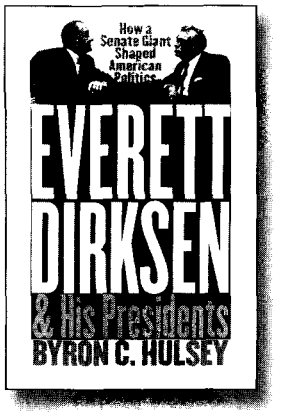

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standing of the era of white supremacy. Purporting to turn the extant paradigm of scholarship on its head, she claims that "while there is a vast scholarly literature on American conceptions about race, most of this literature focuses on white American ideas about black people."

This is somewhat exaggerated. Building on Frederickson's own *Black Image in the White Mind* (1971) and other works that explicated white racist thought, a massive scholarship arose over the past generation to capture this black perspective in all its manifestations, from the world of the slave, to the views of the black abolitionists, to the life of free blacks, to the position of the black soldier, and the mind of the black insurrectionist. Still, Bay's work does address an important question about black thought, in the past and in the present. Why have so many black thinkers readily embraced notions of racial difference, when such ideas were not only the mainstay of white supremacy, but also philosophically damaging to the cause of equality?

IN OUTLINING THE black side of what she calls the "war over the capacities of black people" of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bay trains her gaze upon the ideas about whites held by three groups of African Americans: the black writers who responded to the rise of ethnology, or the "science of the human races"; slaves; and a handful of black spokesmen of the early twentieth century.

The black ethnologists in the early nineteenth century rose to challenge the emergent movement of white ethnology, or the "science of the races," which gave a scientific patina to claims of black inferiority, using phrenological measurements and other pseudoscientific techniques. Black ethnologists drew on the same hybrid of science and religion, at times even accepting the idea of basic racial differences. Yet they, not surprisingly, cast blacks as superior, even destined to usher in a new "Christian empire" as the "redeemer race." Bay rightly charges these thinkers, from Robert Benjamin Lewis and Hosea Easton to Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany, with recapitulating the differential thinking of whites, preaching a kind of "black chauvinism," and thus weakening the strength and the coherence of their attempts to counter white racist arguments.

Bay argues that slaves, by contrast, had a much more universalistic interpretation of Christianity, and held unequivocally to the "sameness" of blacks and whites, and were struck more than anything by whites' seeming inability to differentiate between blacks and animals. For them, the difference between blacks and whites had to do nearly always with the power that whites wielded, rather than with any location of an innate racial character in physical differences. For these conclusions, Bay relies on limited and flawed interviews, conducted in the 1930s, with ex-slaves who were no more than children under slavery and could just as well have been expressing sentiments acquired later on.

AT THE TURN of the century, the ideas of the anthropologist Franz Boas helped to provoke a revolution in thinking about race which ended the hegemony of "scientific racism" or ethnology, and replaced it with "liberal environmentalism," or the idea that racial differences were owed to different environments. While black spokesmen of the early twentieth century, such as W.E.B. DuBois, welcomed this death knell to the idea of innate black inferiority, some of what Bay calls "cultural revitalization movements," notably Garveyism, responded to the racial animosities in the World War I era by turning to the idea of essential racial differences with more vigor than even the black ethnologists. "Ironically, then," she observes about these black chauvinists, "just as the white scientific establishment was finally beginning to dismantle the racial edifice built by nineteenth century science, racial essentialism was scaling previously unreached heights in some quarters of the American black community."

Bay disapproves of the "black religious racialists" who spouted "anti-white mythologies of cultural redemption." Her book can be seen as an attempt to establish whether blacks shared the same belief in innate racial characteristics that fueled white racism. At times, Bay hints that a belief in racial differences compromised any attack on white supremacy, since it failed to challenge racism's root assumption; and she argues that the civil rights revolution was driven by "less militant organizations," whose members "criticized the politics and culture of white Americans quite bitterly," but "no longer traded insults with white supremacists by attacking the innate racial characteristics of white people." At other times Bay expresses sympathy with the black ethnologists for their "intellectual resistance," letting them off the hook for their "chauvinism" by reminding us that their romantic vision of blacks arose as a response to the degrading racist ideology of whites.

Bay is more impatient with the twentieth-century believers in race differences, such as Afrocentrists, though given the lineage of the Nation of Islam and the racialist thought she lays out, it is baffling that she characterizes them as more "radical" and "militant" than civil rights egalitarianism. Her real sympathies lie with the worldview of the slaves (as she renders it through her limited sources), for the reason that she cannot find any "essentialist explanations" there for racial differences and thus no black racialist ideology to counter white racialist ideology. "One lesson that the study of African-American racial thought teaches about the character of racial ideology—even when applied to egalitarian ends—," she warns, "is that the concept of race is virtually inseparable from the idea of a hierarchy among the races." Arguments for "negritude"—the promotion of a unique black identity, as in movements for black pride—may have "undercut rather than sustained any aspiration they had toward a raceless society."

Bay believes that clinging to racial differences worked against the struggle for egalitarianism. It is certainly true that the civil rights consensus rested on the repudiation of a racial analysis of human affairs. Still, if one takes the story further toward the present, one could argue that it was not the revolutionary ethos of the '60s that came to prevail, but a much less edifying reactionary turn. As the civil rights movement ebbed, so did the certainty that racial differences should not be of fundamental importance. It was the racialist wing of the black liberation movement, together with its white sympathizers, that came increasingly to dominate the American discussion of race. In movements such as multicultural education, diversity training, cross-cultural counseling, and the like, this ideology emphasized coming to grips with difference, not moving beyond difference. This celebration of racialism was portrayed as a radical variety of enlightenment by its proponents, but really it was the rankest reaction.

THE REMARKABLE OPUS of Orlando Patterson is of seminal importance in pondering the persistence of differential attitudes toward blacks and whites. Nearly all of his recent work explores in some fashion the codes of racial difference underlying both segregation and integration. Laying bare the meaning and the significance of the brutal rites of white supremacy, Patterson insists that the civil rights movement was a true revolution: it revoked the charter of those rituals of inhumanity, established the rights and privileges of citizenship as the proper preserve of blacks as well as whites, ushered in enormous economic achievement, and permanently altered white attitudes. Yet Patterson proclaims just as forcefully that integration as envisioned by civil rights thinkers has hardly come into its own. The fulfillment of the civil

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rights ideal, he believes, has been impeded by a new set of behaviors and beliefs built on the edifice of the old ones. They are more muted than the codes of enforced white rule, but they, too, have an iron grip, and leave new kinds of destruction in their wake.

Patterson is in the course of writing a trilogy assessing "just how far we have come" on race. His first volume, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's 'Racial' Crisis*, which appeared in 1997, argued that it is high time that we acknowledge the astounding progress that we have made, while renewing our efforts to address persistent problems regarding race. His next volume, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*, turns to a much more sustained analysis of those continuing problems and their sources.

Patterson's work is distinguished by an original recognition of the internal and external conditions that ravage poor black communities, as well as a careful assessment of where each set of conditions fails to explain current realities. The result blends moral outrage (of the kind that we associate with the left) at social injustice with an acknowledgement (of the kind that we associate with the right) of the self-destructive tendencies of African American culture. Explaining his own "intellectual baggage," Patterson has written that his personal experience with the "disaster" of Jamaican politics in the 1970s (he was born in Jamaica in 1940 and studied at Kingston College and the University of the West Indies, before receiving his doctorate from the London School of Economics in 1965) "disabused" him "of all totalizing ideologies," while the ravages of the free market there in the 1980s confirmed his view that, if unrestrained, capitalism leads inevitably to "obscenities of inequality." This places him in a small but influential company of independent thinkers who get routinely attacked for ideas that the more conformist left considers neoconservative, their strictures about American capitalism notwithstanding. Uneasy both with liberal determinism and conservative (or libertarian) autonomism, Patterson attempts to transcend received pieties and categories in order to launch a serious intellectual counteroffensive to the newest incursions on our democratic ideals.

The Ordeal of Integration directly assaulted the limits of contemporary thinking on race. "Something has gone terribly wrong with the way we view and talk about 'race' in America," Patterson began. "For the truth is that we no longer make sense on the subject of 'race.' We have talked ourselves into a hole full of rhetorical quicksand. Our attempts to clarify merely confound, and language itself has become a trap." And the reason for this confusion is that "so much 'race' speech has become ritualized and rhetorical." These rituals obscure the very real signs of progress, and so they keep us from moving beyond some of the older problems of race that we have solved.

In *The Ordeal of Integration*, Patterson laid out what he thought were the central flaws in contemporary discussions of race: the reification of subjectivity that validates all black perspectives on race and dismisses the ideas of whites; the "tendency to racialize all issues relating to" African Americans and to persist in seeing society as comprised of different races even in the absence of any real scientific grounding for their existence; the replacement of a stereotype of blacks as inherently inferior with an equally debilitating and homogenizing rendering of blacks as "helpless victims"; the nihilistic characterization of race relations as worse than ever and the conditions of blacks as an "intractable crisis"—a view that legitimizes inaction and despair and amounts to a capitulation to black and white separatism.

Patterson blames liberals and "Afro-American advocates" for promulgating a "'racism forever' view," which assumes racism is as bad now as it has ever been. Disregarding evidence of the significant advances that blacks have made in nearly every realm, from academics and literature to sports and entertainment, and denying the change in racial attitudes on the part of whites, they follow the erroneous analysis of Andrew Hacker's *Two Nations* (1992), which describes a society rent permanently into two, with blacks of every class suffering from an infinite "litany of abuses—endless slights, chronic insensitivities, restricted opportunities, caste-like avoidances, and intellectual contempt." In Patterson's view, Hacker's book perfectly exemplified the dominant liberal ethos of determinism and systemic blame, which leaves no room for the possibility of moral responsibility—and thus autonomy—for blacks. And "any Afro-American person who dares to question the deterministic dogma is immediately dismissed as a self-hating Uncle Tom and reactionary; any Euro-American person rash enough to do so gets flattened with the twin charges of racism and 'blaming the victim'.... Either that or he is simply ignored."

The only open discussion of moral responsibility comes from conservatives, but often it simply counters the liberal blame on the external forces of institutionalized racism by denying that such

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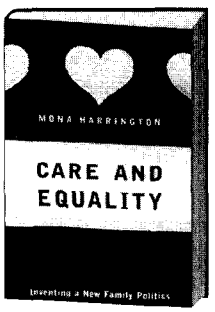

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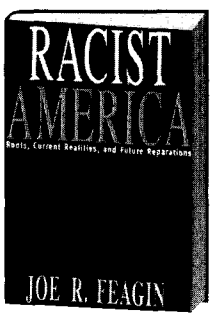

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forces play any part at all. Thus liberals may have an "over-socialized" view, but conservatives have an "under-socialized" view, which fails to account for historical wrongs and cannot conceive of the necessity of some form of redress. Patterson opposes a crass identity politics, with its assumption of perpetual grievance and permanent victimization, *and* he opposes a coldhearted pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality.

As he turns from "guarded optimism" about "where we are now" in *The Ordeal of Integration*, to an assessment of "how far we still have to go" in *Rituals of Blood*, Patterson again tries to transcend "the unrewarding squabbles" between conservatives who traced any remaining problems only to "internal" sources in the black community itself and "mechanistic radicals" who turned only to "external" sources. *Rituals of Blood* consists of three sustained essays, united by what Patterson rightly sees as the need to explain why, given the incredible advances of the civil rights movement, both conditions of life for African Americans and race relations remain so troubled. The first essay looks in depth at the black family today, concluding that its endangered status derives from a genuine crisis in "gender relations among all classes of Afro-Americans," a crisis that is actually "getting worse." The second essay regards with an anthropological eye the lynching of blacks in the Jim Crow South, which Patterson thinks is best understood as a type of ritual sacrifice, in keeping with the interpretation of Christianity by white Southerners in the aftermath of the Civil War. The last essay returns the discussion to the present, and argues that black men now play a role in a kind of national drama that helps to keep "balance" in the polity—the role of Dionysus.

Patterson's reckoning with the ritual of lynching, his detailed recitation of the gruesome deeds of white lynch mobs, is not meant simply to remind us how extreme, how barbarous, and how recent were these depredations. He wishes also to explain their motivation and their function. Drawing on the anthropologists Victor Turner and Mary Douglas, Patterson speculates that the emancipation of the slaves transformed them from a safely conquered and permanently inferior part of the social organism to a "domestic enemy" undeserving of any protection, rights, or decency, just as runaway slaves were earlier deemed to have rebelled against an unwritten code by deserting the protection of the master and entering a threatening, "liminal" state. In the social and moral chaos of the post-Reconstruction South, blacks—and black men in particular—symbolized not only evil, which had to be expelled through lynching, but the "despised, scapegoated, dishonored, humbled, crucified Christ," who also had to be sacrificed in order that "the victorious, militaristic Christ" could triumph. Only such an analysis, in Patterson's view, can explain why whites could insist on total segregation and subject blacks to "demonization, terrorization, and humiliation" during their lives, and then rush in a kind of cannibalistic frenzy to witness the torture and the dismemberment of a lynching victim, in the hopes of taking home a piece of his dead body as a treasured relic.

Patterson associates "this ingenious symbolic perfidy" with the sacrificial strain of Pauline Christianity, which he sees as responsible for the crimes committed in the name of Christianity. He detects a stark difference between forms of Christianity that emphasize sacrificial rites and the symbolism of Christ's death, and those that hark back to Christ's life and teachings. This latter emphasis is distinctly a minority strain, he says, which has surfaced only in rare moments in the form of radical egalitarian movements that respond to Jesus's "call—nay, his command—to love in a spiritual community wherein service, fellowship, worship, forgiveness, and atonement are intimately linked." This is the strain that Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference brought to the fore in the 1950s and 1960s in their vision of the "beloved community." And then the "radical gospel" subsided. Blacks, too, "proclaim[ed] an identity movement that denigrates the moral imperatives of the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind and the politics of coalition that sustained the civil rights movement."

About the post-civil-rights era Patterson is adamant that we refuse at our peril to acknowledge the progress that has been made. The Southern lynching ritual had the tacit approval, and sometimes the active participation, of the community's leading authorities, and it rarely came under investigation, let alone prosecution. To equate that public ritual with the heinous 1998 murder of James Byrd, in Jasper, Texas, who was dragged to his death by three white men in a pickup truck, is to ignore the instant expression of "outrage and disgust on the part of nearly all citizens at what had happened," and the full cooperation in the immediate investigation and arrest of the perpetrators. This difference, Patterson insists, reveals that there has been nothing short of a "sea change in Euro-Americans' attitudes toward Afro-Americans," and belies the fatalistic assertion that "America is still a chronically racist place, and the 'races' remain as far apart as ever."

Then Patterson turns to the problems that remain, which involve what he calls the crisis of "gender relations" in the black community. The most substantial essay in his book, called "Broken Bloodlines," lays out the well-known statistics that illustrate the dire straits of most black American families. But it also presents the less widely accepted assertion that these facts disprove the prettifying myths about male-bonding in the 'hood, surrogate families, and the close extended kinship networks of African Americans. Of all groups of Americans, he soberingly asserts, blacks have the lowest rate of marriage, the highest rate of divorce, the highest rate of loneliness and social isolation, the most disrupted families, and the most antagonistic relationships.

Patterson is aware that, in making these claims, he is breaking one of the new taboos that emerged in the era of integration. Two decades ago, William Julius Wilson observed that ever since the hysterical reaction to the Moynihan Report in 1965, it had become forbidden to discuss the severe problems of the black family in America. Moynihan's report was drenched in the racial and sexual paternalism of its day, but it certainly established the high level of disruption in black communities rooted in broken or single-parent families. "A tangle of pathology," Moynihan called the interconnected problems of poor blacks. It was an unpleasant term that did not suit the desire by many blacks to leave talk of problems behind and instead assert their pride.

Patterson returns with a roar to the question of the black family. He sharply attacks the post-Moynihan revisionist scholarship for glorifying the black family as more viable than it really was under slavery and sharecropping; and he, too, deplores the shift of attention away from the problems of the black family. Patterson recognizes that the torments of the African American family are directly related to the dehumanizing attacks on the role of the black father under slavery, but this is not the end of his analysis. He goes on to claim that the crisis of "gender relations" has taken on "new and alarming forms"—indeed, that it constitutes "the major internal source of the wider problems of Afro-Americans," and is nothing less than "the main means by which the group ends up victimizing itself." Citing extensive statistics, Patterson's important essay identifies genuinely dire problems. As a result of the high rate of marital and relationship disruption, most

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Jerusalem (I)

Whose city – whose "holy city" – is it?

It's thirty-three years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in 1967, that the city of Jerusalem, which had been divided for nineteen years, has been reunited under Israeli rule. But there is still much talk, and many people insist, that solution of the "Middle East Problem" will not be possible until Israeli Jews relinquish their "occupation" and restore the holy city -- or, at the very minimum, its eastern part -- to its "rightful owners", the Moslem Arabs.

What are the facts?

A city of many nationalities. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital."

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Moslems and Jews) with its two mosques, El Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina -- cities that no "infidel" may visit.

A tenuous Moslem claim. It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim of their right to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city". And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

Jerusalem: Never an Arab capital. But the city of Jerusalem -- in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus -- has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or subprovincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

At the center of Jewish life. Jerusalem has stood at the center of the Jewish people's national life since King David made it the capital of his kingdom in 1003 BCE. It remained the capital until the kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians 400 years later. After the return from Babylonian exile, Jerusalem again served as the capital of the Jewish people for the next five and a half centuries.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have synagogues and other holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous and people wouldn't accept it. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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children grow up in households with only one parent, usually the mother; and the absence of a father, as he shows, has a predictable effect on boys in particular, whose most basic psychological demands often go unmet.

African American gender relations, moreover, are often governed by a disruptive "love and trouble" tradition that places men and women at odds. In a complicated analysis of recent poll data on gender attitudes, Patterson concludes that differing expectations, hopes, and worldviews have made black men and black women in significant ways incompatible, and thus prevent the formation of stable and lasting unions. Patterson thinks that a predatory "male-dominance ideology," an "oppositional attitude" toward all authority, and "hip-hop" street culture all feed a "chronic pattern of male infidelity" and misogyny. Black women, despite adhering to "mainstream" values such as fidelity, often send mixed messages; as lovers, they renounce and romanticize men's aggressive posture, and as parents they encourage (and then violently punish) boys' aggression.

As a result, Patterson argues, layers upon layers of recrimination and misbehavior have done terrible damage to the possibility of intact families. While Patterson sees this as largely a phenomenon among the poor, he says that it has parallels in the middle class and receives validation from the wealthy, in the form of the entertainment and sports culture which often accords perniciously with the promiscuous hip-hop culture of the streets. In his concluding essay, "American Dionysus," Patterson shows dispiritingly that this image of black masculinity as essentially predatory and ungovernable meets with little or no resistance in mainstream American culture—that it is, indeed, celebrated by it.

Asking why black Americans, comprising only about thirteen percent of the population, have become an obsession of the majority, Patterson answers that "the Afro-American lies at the heart of Euro-America's conception of itself as a 'race,' as a culture, as a people, as a nation." He thinks that when blacks were seen as too different from, too alien from whites, they could simply be dismissed as inferior; but since the civil rights movement, African Americans have become "liminal figures," and thus serve perfectly as a more physical, more expressive Dionysian foil to the intellectual and restrained Apollonian ideal of mainstream white America.

Astragaloi

We know there must be consciousness in things,
In bits of gravel pecked up by a hen
To grind inside her crop, and spider silk
Just as it hardens stickily in air,
And even those things paralyzed in place,
The wall brick, the hat peg, the steel beam
Inside the skyscraper, and lost, forgotten,
And buried in ancient tombs, the toys and games.
Those starry jacks, those knucklebones of glass
Meant for the dead to play with, toss and catch
Back of the hand and read the patterns of,
Diversions to beguile the endless time,
Never to be picked up again ... They're thinking,
Surely, all of them. They are lost in thought.

Mark Jarman

Patterson continues in this provocative vein. The Dionysian role of the black man allows whites to proceed normally to corporate life after an adolescent fling with hip-hop or the glorification of sports heroes. Thus the representation of brute force, athletic prowess, and erotic desire serves as a counterweight to the more intellectual demands of the everyday work world, and the two forces help America to achieve the balance necessary for the maintenance of the status quo. Meanwhile, the consequences for blacks are devastating, as youth culture becomes infused by "the tone, style, ideals, and moral standards" of the likes of Mike Tyson.

PATTERSON SOMETIMES overstates his case. He overlooks his own warning against our tendency to see all aspects of African American life in racial terms when he hastily dismisses the evidence that white families are suffering from nearly all the same trends as black families. While one can hardly argue against Patterson's conviction that slavery was the ultimate culprit for today's problems, this history certainly cannot explain this unhappy coincidence. Also, his constant comparisons between statistics that are worse for blacks and better for whites have the accumulated effect of suggesting that the situation of whites should be emulated. Recommending interracial marriage as one of the surest ways of stepping out of the cycle of relationships doomed to failure, Patterson seems to forget his own evidence that the white family is experiencing similar disruption. (Social critics from Gertrude Himmelfarb to Catharine MacKinnon agree that American culture has succumbed generally to an "anything-goes" mentality, validated by loosening prohibitions on the degrading portrayal of sex and violence in the media.) This suggests that any change needs to transcend race.

Considering the crisis of the black family apart from the crisis of the white family will yield only partial explanations and limited solutions. In *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams* (1994), Carl Nightingale showed that the troubles that have visited the black community derive not least from a faithful adoption of mainstream values—materialism, violence, hedonism—as they are disseminated by advertising and the visual culture. This should not cause Patterson's insistence on personal responsibility to go unheeded; but it suggests that responsibility should be more widely shouldered. After all, it is not just black women who are giving black men "mixed messages."

Patterson occasionally falls into some of the same "ritualized discourse" that he would have us forsake. Though few would deny the horrors of slavery and lynching, reasonable people have differed over whether the theory of the "emasculation" of black men—apart from the experiences of women—can explain them. In his dismissal of Herbert Gutman, and other revisionist historians of the black family, as on a "mission to prove that slavery had no negative impact on Afro-American gender and family life," Patterson enters a tired debate with an overly simplified stand that hardly reflects his own sophistication. And to assert that any white American is suspect if he or she uses the term "black" to describe people whom Patterson prefers to call "Afro-American," despite the preferences of much of the population in question, harks back to the same set of rituals that stunted interracial discourse and made it hopelessly self-referential.

More significantly, in his analysis of the black male as the American Dionysus, Patterson seems to violate his own command that we must not lose sight of the revolutionary change brought by the civil rights movement. The argument that blacks are no longer "the other," is refreshing, given the stronghold of radical-liberal orthodoxy that makes claims to the contrary. Still, to continue to assert that blacks are liminal figures—no longer "other," but not quite accepted—is to miss just how much has changed in American race relations in our lifetime. What was achieved in the 1960s may have been

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less than normality, but it was more than liminality.

The drama that Patterson has so effectively described may be understood differently. Driven by the best of intentions, many of those who consider themselves the heirs of the revolution continued over the last third of the twentieth century to fight the good fight as they see it. Though their efforts have translated into concrete achievements—the hiring and the promoting of blacks are the most tangible benefits—they have just as often gone awry. Race advocates feed a kind of racial-problems industry that focuses unduly on crime, low test scores, and welfare entitlement among blacks, ignoring the larger context of violence, drug abuse, low educational achievement, and the sense of entitlement among Americans more generally. And they feed also a racial-solutions industry, which often perpetuates a ritual of overcompensation for the racist past that encourages disingenuous behavior by whites and exempts blacks from standards of expression and behavior to which others are expected to adhere. This racial-solutions industry promotes a hyper-sensitivity to "difference," and a false or exaggerated admission to racism by whites.

The effect of the "diversity" movement on race relations has certainly been negative. The ideal of "diversity" does not merely "value" differences; it also makes them ineluctable and unbridgeable and final. Such thinking promulgates false new generalizations about people, and an atmosphere of perpetual insults and wounds, rather than a general climate of civility based on the equal status that all Americans are supposed to inherit. It is simply another incarnation of racialist thought. The "American Dionysus" is at least in part a product of a misguided kind of anti-racism, which fosters new ideas about racial difference and promotes raw release as a form of racial therapy, a deserved exemption to the rules based on the legacy of racial wrongs.

The only alternative to differential or racialist thinking is not "color-blindness," which denies the aesthetic and sensory nature of the human condition and neglects our unfortunate historical inheritance. A better alternative would entail more careful judgments, finer distinctions, a repudiation of the stale terms and rituals that have taken us nowhere, a new sense of proportion about where differences come into play and where they do not. Nor is insensitivity the only alternative to "sensitivity" about group differences. Sensitivity to other people as individuals should be part of any democratic concept of civility—but it must always be buttressed by a radical egalitarianism, which is precisely *not* case-sensitive. The genius of the civil rights movement was to be found, surely, in its universalism. In a country with our history, anything less than universalism gives racial thinking a new lease on life. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 5

contain an exception for the woman's health. This is deliberate. As Chief Judge Richard Posner of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals concluded: "These statutes ... are concerned with making a statement.... The statement is that fetal life is more valuable than women's health."

Rosen's argument seems to be that if the Court would just overrule its "misguided" *Roe* precedent—or at least would explain its reasoning more clearly—"pro-life activists" would somehow stop writing dangerous and immoderate laws that hurt vulnerable women. Although, like Rosen, I would love to see the debate about abortion take on a more moderate cast, I see no support for this wishful thinking.

PETER J. RUBIN
Associate Professor of Law
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

JEFFREY ROSEN REPLIES:
I was trying to say that not a single state has passed a ban on third-trimester abortions that contains only a narrow exception for the woman's *physical* health, as Senator Tom Daschle has proposed to do in the Senate. I hope this was clear in the part of the sentence that Peter J. Rubin has omitted—in the wake of the *Casey* decision, a physical-health exception is the narrowest reading of what the Constitution requires—but, if it wasn't, I'm grateful for the chance to clear up any ambiguity. Thirty-five states have indeed banned third-trimester abortions except when necessary to protect the mother's life or health, but if "health" is defined so broadly that it includes emotional as well as physical health, as it was in the *Bolton* case, then these restrictions may have little practical impact. But pro-choice and pro-life advocates, eager to score political points, have refused to support a narrow physical-health exception that would force the Supreme Court to reveal whether it is willing to revisit *Bolton* as advances in reproductive technology continue to shift the boundaries of fetal viability. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Walking the Walk

ALREADY THE STORY IS taking its place—alongside Johnny Appleseed's munificent ramblings and the young Lincoln's treks to borrow a book—in American ambulatory lore. It's Friday evening, the Jewish Sabbath is beginning, and Joseph Lieberman, forbidden by his faith to travel by car, begins the long walk from the Capitol to his Georgetown home. In the week since the Connecticut senator became Al Gore's running mate, that scene has appeared in countless reverential bios. In *The Washington Post*, for instance, Richard Cohen devoted a column to the night when Lieberman hiked "five miles in the bitter cold" to join his family for a Shabbat meal. Cohen concluded: "The man who walked home that cold night could have driven. No one would have known. He could have walked two blocks and hailed a cab. No one would have known that, either—or cared. I suspect, though, that Joe Lieberman walked all the way because he knew—as Clinton, for one, never has known—that selling out, like a long walk home, begins with a single step."

PERHAPS, BUT LET'S NOT GET SENTIMENTAL. Lieberman could have walked simply because he was commanded to, without any thought to the ethical implications. Orthodox Judaism values ritual observance even when it is performed unthinkingly, entirely by rote. When the children of Israel accepted the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, the Bible says they proclaimed: "*Na'aseh ve'nishma*, we will do [them] and we will listen." The order is important: Do first, understand later. The rabbis in the Talmud developed the behavioral priority this way: "From observance not for its own sake an individual may come to observance for its own sake."

BUT IF THE TALMUDIC COMMENTATORS recognized the opacity of the relationship between ritual and ethics, today's political and journalistic commentators have shown considerably less caution. The most frequently assumed link is between Lieberman's religious observance and his political probity. Thus, the day after the senator's selection as Gore's running mate, *The Washington Post* editorialized, "Mr. Lieberman has spent a career in politics.... Yet he has maintained a reputation for integrity that is sadly rare in the profession. He has kept faith with Orthodox Judaism even when it was politically inconvenient...." But few would assume an elected official has political integrity simply because he is a devout Christian. And, were America's pundits more familiar with Orthodox Jewish politicians, they would realize that their service runs the ethical gamut as well. One doesn't even need to look to Israel for examples of politicians who walk to synagogue on Saturday and pilfer from the state during the week. In Brooklyn, as well, strictly Orthodox politicians have run afoul of the law.

BUT AT LEAST THE EQUATION BETWEEN strict observance and public ethics is relatively nonpartisan. Even worse is the assertion that Lieberman's religiosity explains either his political conservatism or his political liberalism. Leaders of the Christian right—eager to believe that, deep down, all men of God are socially conservative—see each of Lieberman's deviations from Democratic Party orthodoxy as a reflection of his Jewish Orthodoxy. That's why, while Jerry Falwell has called Gore's selection of a devout Jew "wonderful," he doesn't celebrate the piety of Representatives Peter Deutsch and Robert Wexler—the two other, more politically liberal Orthodox Jews in Congress. And it's why in last week's *New York Times*, when Republican Senator Sam Brownback described his friendship with Lieberman as premised on a "share[d] ... belief in universal Truths, in a moral order ordained by God," he added that these common principles have led to "similar ideas of how to improve our laws and our society. [On] Social Security reform, missile defense, and tort reform, Senator Lieberman has followed his conscience across party lines." And so Lieberman's decision to buck the party's left wing is based on a sacred, revealed truth. As if the Talmud had a view on ballistic missile defense.

MEANWHILE, SOME SECULAR JEWS have also posited a link between Lieberman's religious and political calculations. They have extracted from their tradition a vaguely Judaized regard for social justice while at the same time discarding the husk of the biblical commandments. By merging Lieberman's political and religious identities and by suggesting that the same imperatives that lead him to keep the Sabbath led him to register voters in Mississippi in the 1960s or to support gay rights today, they can claim his Judaism as their own.

THE PROBLEM WITH THESE ATTITUDES is that they court disappointment, and even vituperation. For as soon as Lieberman makes a political decision that runs counter to the principles he supposedly shares with the right or the left, his religious integrity becomes suspect. Already, conservatives are wondering how Lieberman, supposedly a man of God, could be pro-choice. The cover story in Marvin Olasky's *World Magazine* this week quotes a right-wing rabbi as saying, "I'm always mystified by anyone who claims to be an Orthodox Jew and yet is a liberal." And in an article for Beliefnet.com, Michael Lerner accuses Lieberman of straying from the "Torah tradition," citing his support for the pro-business policies of the Democratic Leadership Council.

MOST DISTURBINGLY, THE IMPULSE to conflate political and religious obligations seems to have reached Lieberman himself. So, when asked by Larry King about abortion, Lieberman cited the rabbinical disagreement between those who believe life starts at conception and those who say it begins at fetal viability. "It's a matter of personal judgment," Lieberman argued. "And, like everything else in Judaism, ultimately it's up to each of us to decide what we think is right." Thus Lieberman explains an admirable approach to politics—one's conscience should come before one's party—as a function of Judaism and misrepresents an Orthodox tradition that he surely knows is not nearly that libertarian.

THE GREAT IRONY IN ALL THIS conflation of religious doctrine and public life is that it is what Modern Orthodox Judaism arose, at least in part, to reject. Modern Orthodoxy was launched in nineteenth-century Germany by observant Jews who wished to participate in all realms of existence. And it insisted, in the face of fierce opposition, that all realms do not submit equally to religious authority, that the religious tradition need not promise an answer for each of life's multitudinous questions. Political questions do not always have theological answers; on certain subjects, the OMB can be more helpful than the Babylonian Talmud. This is an important admission, not merely for political life but for spiritual life as well. For a healthy spiritual existence often depends on the rigorous separation of the sacred from the mundane—which is what a man might be thinking about as he walks miles in the cold on a Friday night.

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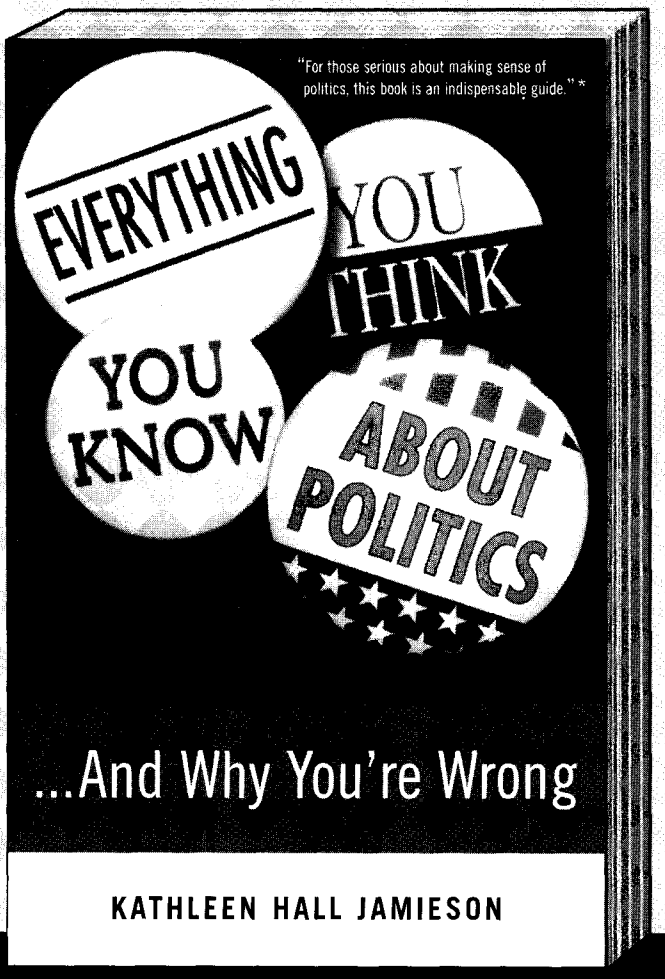
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